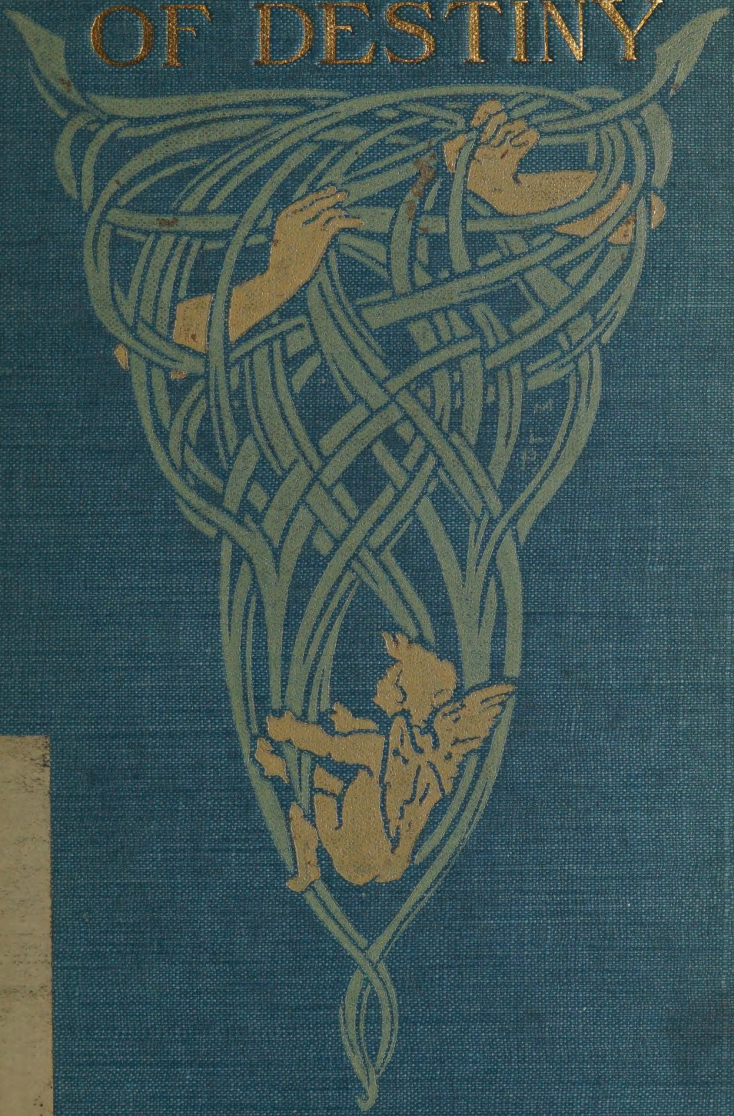
A LITTLE SISTER OF DESTINY



GELETT BURGESS

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To I. H. G.

Romance is in the scabbard, Adventure in the blade;
Before the sword is flourished has Fancy all essayed —
The moment ere I met her abounded like a dream —
Romance is in the shadow, Adventure in the gleam!

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PROLOGUE

I HAVE called my heroine Miss Million, for several reasons. First, she was one of a million, though you may perhaps say that one such is enough. Second, she was one of millions — how many, precisely, I can't say; ten were all she owned up to. She had been left the sole heiress to so rich a California estate that I might call her the Princess Tehema, though the way she used her fortune, rather than its amount, justifies that title.

Her ranch in that county can vie with any of the lesser principalities of Europe in size and revenue and semi-feudal loyalty. Her wealth, however, did not come alone from its wheat, cattle, sheep, and wines, and the rentals of subdivisions themselves big enough to make conspicuous spots upon the map of California; for a half-dozen placer mines on the Sacramento River and a few railroads were also under her control.

But my third reason is the best of all. I don't care to have her real name known, nor would she like to be identified as the heroine of these tales, for, so far, romance has been possible to her only

because few were acquainted with her, or, knowing her, were aware of her fortune — as you shall see in my chronicles.

So, that you may regard them as pure fiction, I shall relate them in the third person, patching together what I saw, what she told me, and what I found out afterward.

She herself would be the first to admit to the reproachful sociologist that what she gave away was given in "sentimental charity." But I like to think that after all was done, it was not the money she gave that was most valued, but that knowing her was something infinitely more precious, something long to be remembered.

Adventures come to the adventurous, and Miss Million had a genius for Romance. Her spirit was that of Mlle. de Maupin, but her quest was not altogether selfish. She sought, too, Romance rather than Adventure — no one ever knew better the fine distinction between the two, no one's imagination ever so illumined a commonplace situation with dramatic potentialities.

I call her a Little Sister of Destiny because of a sympathy, a talent, and a will that enabled her to act as a goddess from the machine, interposing her love to defeat Fate.

Prologue

Never was a man so gallant towards women as she, wherefore it is always another woman who is the nominal heroine of these tales; yet if I give but glimpses of Miss Million, those hints show her more truly in mind and character than if I set her in the centre of the stage. That, indeed, was never her place if she could help it; she was a sort of Stage Director where "all the world's a stage," and part playwright, part prompter, too.

Enough for the Prologue: let me raise the curtain upon my own initiation.

Miss Million was in New York for the first time in her life — she knew scarcely any one save her lawyers — she was young, ardent, fanciful, rich — and it was spring. There's a spirited orchestra of the emotions for you!

I

The Story of the Private Secretary

AT exactly three o'clock Winton Rayne lighted a cigarette. The green shades had been drawn down in the windows of the front door, and the bank was closed. A few favored customers, arriving in a hurry, were admitted, it is true, but the official discipline of the bank was relaxed. Amongst these tardy arrivals, Rayne, checking up his stubs, noticed, with leisurely approval, a young woman clad in gray, who loitered for a moment within view of his window. She was smartly dressed, but with that elegant simplicity which appeals most strongly to the masculine taste. Her hat was one smooth, untrimmed toque, all of gray breast feathers, the plunder of a score of birds, broken only by two soft creases on top. Her gloves and shoes were gray as well, and in her hand she carried a gray suède purse. A girdle of dull silver completed the harmony. Rayne, unfortunately, could not make out her face,

but from her trim figure and graceful carriage it promised much.

He turned to his accounts, and lost sight of her in the search, with Briggs, of the one cent which prevented his books from balancing. This took some time. It was nearly four before he went to his locker, changed his thin black office jacket for his street coat, found his stick, and left the bank.

It was a clear, balmy spring afternoon, and the prospect of a walk up the avenue allured him. There was nothing on his mind now but the glad welcome of the season and the prospect of three hours' enjoyment of its friendliness. His afternoon and his evening were free, and he did not look fifteen minutes ahead, resolving to embrace any whim of the moment.

He was crossing Twenty-Third Street when a red automobile shot past him. He watched it elude the traffic, skillfully manœuvre across Broadway, and slow down by the monument beyond. It was driven by a woman, who was alone in the vehicle. It took but a second glance to assure Rayne that she was the lady in gray who had visited the bank. He increased his pace.

When he reached Twenty-Sixth Street, the machine was about a block ahead of him, but it was running at slow speed. He saw the chauffeuse turn, and with some premonition of good fortune he hurried forward. Just before reaching Twenty-Eighth Street, the car drew up to the curb and stopped, but its occupant made no motion to descend. Rayne walked up as slowly as he dared.

Just as he was abreast of her, trying not to stare, the young woman leaned slightly towards him and called his name. He halted, in some excitement, and raised his hat.

"This is Mr. Rayne, is it not?" an extremely soft and pleasant voice inquired.

"Why, yes!" he stammered.

"Don't you want to come to ride?" she asked, as if mimicking some teasing child. "I 'm so tired of going about alone."

He jumped in on the instant, but his surprise was too great for him to find words with which to answer her. She started the machine immediately, and they sped up Fifth Avenue.

Her face was so whimsically charming, her manners so piquantly demure, that for some time Rayne could not emerge from his wonder

and embarrassment. She made no attempt to help him, but attended with a prettily business-like skill to the direction of her car. Her red lips were twitching, however, and her hazel eyes danced when she ventured to cast a second's look at him. From time to time, as he kept his silence, her delicate black brows were raised, and fell again. As they came into Upper Fifth Avenue and the quiet of the Park, however, she looked him mischievously in the face.

"Well," she said, "what are you thinking?"

"I am thinking what luck I 'm having," he answered, "and wondering how long it will last."

"During good behavior," she replied, smiling in encouragement.

"Oh, I 'll be good — I 'm afraid I 'll be too good!" Rayne gasped. The blood was singing in his veins.

"Tut, tut!" she commanded. "Don't kill the goose that laid the golden egg! Aren't you wondering why you 're chosen for my companion?"

"I don't dare," he admitted, "for fear you 've been deceived in some way. Don't investigate

me too sharply. I 'm hoping you won't find that I 'm a mistake."

She laughed merrily, with an imp in her eye that entranced him. She was mistress of the situation, and it was futile for him to question himself as to its probable meaning. He did not care. So long as he could be with her and revel in the delight of that fresh, jubilant, mischievous face, he was content with the mystery. So they sped on gayly, exchanging nonsense in a quick helter-skelter, rattle-pated dialogue, she always one or two flashing, smiling jokes in the lead. They turned into the Park and came back towards the city slowly. She stopped her car near a cross-path, and before he could help her she had leaped lightly out.

" Come and take a walk ! " she commanded.

Rayne lost no time following her. He was cool now, and master of himself, though eagerly curious to catch some hint which might explain the situation. They had not walked far before his vivacious entertainer espied a vacant bench and sat herself on it. Rayne followed her example.

" I suppose you think I 'm mad," she suggested, drawing crosses in the gravel with her toe.

"I think I must be," he replied. "It certainly does n't seem real life to me!"

"Confess you want to know who I am?" she went on.

"It would be no compliment to you if I did n't," he said.

"Well, I 'll tell you, and it will be more than half true. I am absolutely my own mistress, I am rich enough not to have to be conventional, old enough to know what my youth is worth, young enough to believe that no one will think ill of me if I speak my mind, as honest as a woman ever dares to be, and an inveterate believer in the possible romance of the commonplace. Oh, dear! just look at that funny old man."

Rayne turned his eyes and saw the very stage caricature of an antiquated German approaching, reading a newspaper as he walked. He held it to his near-sighted eyes so closely that he could scarcely see where he was going. As he drew nearer, he stopped, looked about, and, making out their bench, sat down upon the end, taking off his hat to the lady beside him. Then he removed his spectacles, placed them in a case, and put them down beside him. From a paper

bag in his pocket he drew out a piece of bread, which he crumbed and scattered upon the gravel for the sparrows.

The young lady in gray had been watching him in amusement. She turned, now, and whispered to Rayne, "Listen! I've got the old man's spectacles here in my hand, where he can't find them. Come along, we'll walk on and leave him, and see what he does when he misses them!" As she spoke, she arose and walked swiftly away. In an instant Rayne was after her. He had turned suddenly red, and his hands were clenched nervously.

"I'm afraid you have made some mistake," he said, in a voice he could scarcely control. "I am *not* the person you were looking for. I can't see such a practical joke played on any one, least of all such a poor old man as that. Surely you're not going to be so cruel! Won't you let me return his glasses — see, he's looking for them now. I'm sorry to seem to be a prig, but" —

"Please don't say another word," said his companion. "I'm ashamed of myself already. Here they are — I haven't the face to give them back myself. But wait a moment."

She opened her gray bag and took a bill from her purse. Quick as were her motions, Rayne's eyes, sharpened by his work in the bank, were quicker. It was a hundred-dollar bill. She caught his surprised expression. "Really, I have nothing smaller," she said apologetically, and as she smiled up to him there were tears in her eyes. She tucked the note into the spectacle-case, and waited while he went over to the old man and returned it. Then they walked towards her car.

"I 'm afraid to ask you what I was going to ask," she said archly. "But, would you — do you think you 'd like to — come to dinner with me, Mr. Rayne?" She had cast down her eyes coquettishly. "I want to be amused, to-night, and — and — there are other reasons. You may come as you are, for we 'll be alone."

"'Breathes there a man with soul so dead'" — he began.

"All right, we must hurry, then," she said, "for though it is n't necessary for you to dress, it is for me!"

Just before they reëntered the automobile, she stopped again. "I 'm going to be silly and melodramatic," she announced. "Are you will-

ing to go blindfold till we get to my apartments?" Rayne smiled and nodded. "Take these smoked glasses and put the goggles over them, then," she said, "and I trust to your honor to keep your eyes closed until we are at home."

He did as she requested, and the car started. It went swiftly, turned several corners, and at last stopped. The girl took Rayne by the arm and helped him descend to the sidewalk; then she walked him up a few steps, across a marble hall. He felt himself rising in an elevator.

A door was opened and shut, and they had entered. "Look!" she said.

He saw a great hall furnished in the most extravagantly complete style of Indian art. The walls were entirely covered with Navajo and Hopi blankets. There was a frieze of Apache hide-shields, each painted with a brave's totem, and beneath, a solid cornice of buffalo skulls. Puma-skins carpeted the floor; at least a hundred baskets trimmed with partridge feathers were scattered about; trophies of Indian bows, arrows, lances, war-clubs, tomahawks, pipes, and knives decorated the wall spaces. Two couches were made up of Zuñi

bead-work ornaments and buckskin embroideries. In spite of all this, it was a tastefully designed room, rather than a museum, flaming with color and vibrant with virility.

Rayne had but a glance about before he was taken into a reception-room as perfectly if more soberly furnished.

"Now," said his hostess, "you must amuse yourself for half an hour, while I get ready. Look at anything that interests you, and smoke, if you like, provided you smoke my cigarettes — I can endure nothing but Spanish tobacco." She pointed to a package of "La Justicias," and bowing mockingly, left the room.

Winton Rayne looked about him. The room was purest Colonial, and his eye ranged from the fine Sheraton sideboard to the high-boy, the Martha Washington work-table, the Chippendale chairs, the kidney-shaped table, the circular concave mirror, the goose-legged grandfather chair, the tall clock, and a quaint bookcase, with fanciful panes making odd patterns in its doors. This was filled with books; it might give some clue. He ran his eyes over the titles on the calfskin backs, — "The Story of Peter Wilkins," "The Fourth Dimension,"

"Essays of Montaigne," "Memoirs of Casanova," "The Life Romance of an Algebraist," "Sylvie and Bruno, Concluded," "The Song of Hiawatha," "The Shoes That Danced," "Our Mutual Friend,"—what could one make of such a collection as that!

Then he turned to an alluring piece of furniture in the corner, a mahogany secretary. Its lid was let down, showing two rows of pigeonholes and drawers, and strewed in confusion upon the writing-pad were at least a dozen letters. He cast one quick look and turned away, lest he should permit his eye to be too inquisitive with the addresses. His glance was thoughtless, but he congratulated himself that it did not betray the name he would have liked so much to know. As it was, either the envelopes showed only their backs, or had their faces sufficiently covered to conceal the writing. He sat down upon a huge sofa with rolling swan-headed sides, and took up a book. From time to time he cast a look towards the secretary, but he did not move from his seat.

She came down to him as the tall clock, moon-dialed, struck seven. She came in as still as a ghost, luminous with jewels, transcendent

in a royally simple costume of white lace. He rose and gasped, so wonderfully was she arrayed, as if in mists and starlight. She cast down her eyes in roguery and awaited his comment.

He could think of nothing better to do than drop to his knee in the old manner, and kiss the hand which she outstretched. Yet it was hard to play up to the romance of the situation, and he found himself striving above all things to be natural, to make himself worth while to her who had so graciously honored him. She had changed subtly, so subtly that at first he thought it only because of the bewildering elegance of her costume that she seemed a trace more remote. But he soon saw it was not that; she was as full of mischievous smiles, as sweet in her trust of him, but she was receding from that familiarity with which she had flattered him by daylight. Yet the change was so slight as not to chill his ardor.

Dinner was announced by a maid, and the two entered the dining-room. It was so large that it might almost be called a hall, but the charm of a smaller apartment was preserved by setting the table on a raised and recessed plat-

form underneath a gallery at the far end. This blazed with candles, making a rich spot of color, like the stage of a theatre, and from his seat there Rayne could look down into the dusk of the main room, with its rose window in the end wall. It was all like a dream, — the lights, the sparkling crystal, the flash of gold plate, the vases of dewy cyclamen; and above all, the bewitching curves and curls and smiles of the face opposite made him giddy. He looked away to the shadowy walls below him and tried to steady his reason.

They talked — of what, Rayne afterwards tried vainly to recall. They laughed, jested, drank to each other impromptu toasts, and ate strange dishes, while a maid in Indian costume came and went continually. From some concealed balcony the soft music of stringed instruments rose and fell. Rayne lost all count of time. He strove to lash himself into some comprehension of his dream, but it grew too much for him. Had they been for a moment alone, he would have demanded some explanation of this whim, but the maid was always there. Through all his companion's talk and jesting he had enough delicacy and perception

to perceive that she was not to be questioned, and that she was to set the pace, not he; and he took his cue from her.

So the dinner went on from wonderful to still more wonderful course, and his mystery grew deeper. He was almost afraid of her now; it was almost as if some princess had captured him and was entertaining herself with his bewilderment, only to turn him to ridicule at the end. Yet this girl was modern to the finger-tips which caressed her cigarette. Her talk was terse with Western idiom, her smile was full-hearted, her eyes steady and sincere. He gave it all up a hundred hundred times.

The great clock in the dining-hall struck eleven as his *vis-à-vis* sipped the last drop of her Benedictine. She arose, and he followed suit. She held her glass for scarcely more than three drops, and extended it towards his.

"To the romance of the commonplace!" she said. They drank together.

"I am sorry to say that I have an appointment in half an hour," she added; and then, looking at him frankly, "I will ask you to give me your word to do exactly as I direct. When

you leave this house, don't look back, for the name is lettered on the transom, and don't look at any other houses on the street so that you can identify them. Keep your eyes shut till your cab stops, and ask no questions. Is this requiring too much of you?"

Rayne bowed, and with less affectation than before, he took her hand and touched it to his lips. She smiled her last smile at him from the door of the dining-hall, and then disappeared. Rayne waited for a few minutes, and then went out by the same way.

He was met in the Indian hall by a maid, who handed him his hat and stick, saying, "There's a cab waiting below, sir."

He left, and according to his promise, with no effort to betray her confidence, stepped into his cab, closed his eyes, and was driven rapidly home.

All next day Rayne nursed his dream. He scarcely spoke to his fellows at the bank, conjuring their silence by complaints of a fictitious headache. His mind was busy, going and coming like an ant searching for its home. But there was no clue to guide his action. With just what was his honor intrusted? Was it the

better part to await some new invitation, or to seek himself an answer to the riddle? His reply did not come till evening.

He walked up the avenue at four o'clock, as before, but there was no gray angel to guide him to Paradise. He went home, dressed, and then, too unquiet to meet the talk of his friends at his club, walked down to the Martin, and took a seat alone. The place was full, and but for a friendly waiter, Rayne could not have secured a table. There he sat, more alone than ever in the bustling crowd of strangers.

He was looking over the bill of fare when a man of affable manner and easy comfort put his hand to a chair opposite where Rayne sat.

"Do you mind if I sit down here?" he asked. "There's no other place, and it would be a great favor to me."

Rayne nodded, not too pleased at the interruption of his reverie. The stranger grew expansive. "Do you know," he said, "I am about to commit an indiscretion! I don't know you, and I'm pretty sure you don't know me. I'm from San Francisco, on my first trip to New York. I've been here only three days, and the Heavens have opened and angels de-

scended already! Want to hear a corruscating tale? I suppose I would n't tell it to my own wife, if I had one, but you are a stranger, and it 's just as if I was telling it to a Martian. I 've seen a few fireworks put off on the Pacific slope, but there are one or two things the effete East can give us points on. Shall I tap my Arabian Nights Entertainment?"

Rayne had become interested in spite of himself. "Go ahead," he replied.

"Not yet," remarked the Westerner. "Before I lift the curtain, I 'd like to gamble." He drew out a double eagle as he spoke. "I lay a twenty on this table, and I will bet you even money that you can't match my fairy tale of real life with one of your own. I 'm prepared to furnish names and dates."

The humor of the thing pleased Rayne. He drew forth a twenty-dollar bill and placed it beside the gold piece.

"Here it is, then," said the stranger. "I was walking up Fifth Avenue two days ago, when a girl came by in a red automobile. What 's the matter?"

"Go ahead," said Rayne.

"She stopped right abreast of me and called

me by name. Asked me if I wanted a ride. She was a wizard and an archduchess for looks, and her outfit had Redfern sewed into a sack. Well, I went right up into the air. You can figure pretty close to what I said; it was what an Indian famine victim would say if you asked him if he wanted a chicken pie. What the devil are you staring at? Don't you believe it? You wait. I'll give you the girl's name and address, by jimminy!"

Rayne bit his cigarette nearly in two, but managed to say, "Never mind the names, go on. I *am* a bit interested."

"Say, I did n't wake up for some few hours, but this was my vision of delight. We rode out the Avenue, stopping at the Garden of Eden, Paradise, Arcady, and way-stations. I was twenty-one again, and God was in his Heaven, and all right with the world. We had some conversation, but it was mostly me drinking down smiles that did for me worse than Manhattan cocktails, and watching two eyes twinkling like electric light on a glass of champagne. I 'm no poet, but I could bust a hole in all the blank verse Shakespeare ever wrote if it would do any good in describing my queen. But that's

only half. She took me home to dinner, into a palace of gold and silver and precious stones that made the St. Regis look like a dug-out. And all this, mind you, not by the Empress of the Bowery or a blonded Actorine out for press stories, but a Venus de Milo, who 's too good for any Four Hundred the Angel Gabriel could round up. And then — what d' you think? The bottom fell out of the clouds I was traveling on, and I was hustled out into the night. And that 's all. Stranger, I ask you, as one Christian gentleman to another, does this sort of thing happen often, or did I imbibe some new knock-out drop with my morning meal? Can you match this melodrama, my young friend? If so, you can have the twenty!"

"You say you know her name, and where she lives?" Rayne inquired eagerly.

"Yes, I 've got it here, somewhere," the stranger said, fumbling with a huge wallet. "Would n't you like to go up against that pipe-dream?"

"No, thanks," said Rayne wearily. "Take your twenty; I 'm afraid that 's too good a story for me to beat. And you 'll pardon me if I leave, won't you?"

"Why, you have n't eaten dinner yet!" the other exclaimed.

"I don't care for any dinner," Rayne replied, and taking his hat he walked miserably home.

. . . . . .

In the next Sunday's "Herald" the following "Personal" appeared: —

> AUTOMOBILE: Will my chauffeuse and hostess of last Tuesday permit me to see her and ask an explanation of her fantastic kindness? If so, address BANK.

And two days afterwards, Rayne received this note, written upon blue paper with a curious incomprehensible engraved crest, or seal: —

"*I shall be glad to see you, if you can find me.*"

With this consent to his search, he began his investigations. His impression had always been that the unknown's apartment house was one of the line of stone, Byzantine-fronted buildings on 58th Street, east of Fifth Avenue, but they were too much alike for him to identify the particular one he had visited. He cast aside at once the idea of putting a detective upon the girl's track, and began to attempt to trace her himself.

He dined at the Martin every night, in hopes of meeting the Californian again, but sight of the stranger was not vouchsafed him. He visited every large stationer in town, hoping to identify the crest stamped upon his letter, but it was unknown. He visited dealers in curiosities, hoping to find the customer who had bought Indian relics, but no news came from this.

He was entering his cheques one day at the bank, when he came across one which caught his eye like the waving of a flag. At first he scarcely knew why, and looked at the oblong piece of paper as if hypnotized. It was drawn for six hundred and sixty-six dollars and sixty-six cents, — that alone was enough to give him pause, — but it was not the amount, it was the queer, fat little letters, with their painfully slow and accurate downstrokes, their round "o's," and heavily dotted "i's." In a flash he remembered — it was the writing he had seen in the letter from his unknown. He looked eagerly at the name, "Margaret Million."

It was indorsed by a well-known customer of the bank, a ladies' tailor, and that noon Rayne paid her a visit.

"Miss Million?" she said, smiling indulgently. "Oh, yes, she 's at the Mendocino, on Fifty-Seventh Street, Mr. Rayne. I 've just sent up a love of a *crêpe de chine!*"

At three o'clock Rayne was on his way, at half past he found the place. He entered the lower hall — yes, the same walls of marbles of variegated hues, which he had mentally compared to castile and colored toilet soaps, the same negro boy in the elevator, the same heavy, mahogany, nameless door to the flat. He rang. The same Indian maid came to the door.

She showed him in without surprise, and he entered the Colonial drawing-room, wondering now what he should say. The story of the stranger from California had all but disillusioned him, and yet he could not forget the entrancing impressions he had formed of the gay and lovable girl who had intoxicated him with romance. He had had time to think of the incident of the old man's spectacles, too, and had thought of it with a pang. Surely she was a creature of inconsistencies. And then in another moment she was there! Every doubt of her fell away, dispelled by the frankness of

her smile and the steady glance of those hazel eyes. He went to her and kissed her hand, repledging his homage.

"I am so glad you have come," she said, and seated herself by him. "I was afraid for a while that I had made it too hard for you, but you have won. I suppose you have come to ask me questions, to get some explanation of all that has happened? But let me speak first — for I am ready to tell you everything."

He would have stopped her, for it seemed so base to suspect her of anything common or flippant that he was already ashamed; but she went on without waiting.

"I am a stranger in New York," she said, "and I intend to remain so. I am hungry for life, for romance of the better sort, for knowledge of human nature, for a chance to help out, sometimes, in ways that are not usually taken. For all this it is necessary that I should have assistance, and it is you that I have selected. You are not the first one that I have tried, however. I have been terribly disappointed. One has violated my confidence, and I am afraid to think what you will have thought of me; I mean the Californian who met you

at the Café Martin. How you treated him I know also, and I give you my hand in thanks for your consideration."

"You know — that, too?" he stammered.

"I know everything! It was not exactly a trap I laid for you, for chance came to my assistance; but I found out much that I wanted to know about you. To resume: I need a private secretary. I need a man, moreover, who has manners, honor, kindness, and cleverness. When I reached New York, I went to my lawyer to find such a man, and of the five recommended to me, you alone have possessed these four requirements. It took but a few minutes to make sure that your manners were above reproach. Your kindness I proved to my satisfaction, although at the temporary loss of my own self-respect, by that deliberate trick on the old man in the Park. Your honor was proved by the fact that you did not attempt to find out by unfair means where I lived, and your shrewdness was shown by your instant recognition of the writing on the cheque that I made sure would pass through your hands. Mr. Rayne, for all these tests I beg your pardon. When you know me better, I am sure that you

will understand my nature, and forgive the way I made myself certain."

"And now," she said, raising her eyes for the first time to his, "will you act as my private secretary and confidential agent, at any salary you care to name?"

No one ever refused a request accompanied by such a glance as that. At least, Mr. Rayne did not.

II

Sally, The Scroyle

I HAD not long been in Miss Million's employ when the following adventure took place. In sorting her newspaper clippings (she had hundreds, which it was my business to classify and index), I came upon many relating to the stage, and in especial to the lives and habits of the lesser known actors and actresses. Amongst her notes, too, were many comments, speculations, and queries as to the life behind the scenes.

I was not surprised, therefore, when one day she asked me for information about New York theatres, and set me to find out systematically (as a detective bureau might do it) all that I could concerning the several Stage Managers in town.

After I had prepared this information, she told me that she was to be away from her apartments for an indefinite period, leaving her half-caste maid, Hachewa, in charge. The address she gave me was that of a lodging-house on West Forty-Third Street, where, however, I was forbidden

to communicate with her, except upon important, urgent business, or when I was sent for.

Meanwhile, I was to have an eye on her apartments, see that all meals were served as usual, whether she appeared or not, and to attend to the regular routine of my work as confidential agent for her ranch in California. I was also in absolute charge of her bank account, which at this time amounted, in New York, to seven millions.

During the two months which Miss Million was away, I was called upon to assist her several times, and my part in the following story will be sufficiently evident from the narrative.

Sally, the Scroyle

THE stage director of the McCabe Theatre had come downtown early, and was in a mood for hard work. He was alert and observing, wherefore the two young women waiting in the hallway caught his eye, and he estimated their professional use to him in a glance.

"Who are those two girls out there?" he asked of his secretary, as soon as he was seated at his desk.

"Looking for a job," said the secretary. "One has a letter from Hastings; the other's traveling on her face, I think."

"Bring in the one with the letter," said Mr. Toland.

She came in a moment—a slight, wiry, blonde girl with a deal of character in her face, but scant of obvious beauty. Her violet eyes were steady and full of will, without being at all hard. Her hair was Romanesque, full of virility. She handed Mr. Toland a note, which he looked

over carelessly. Then he gave her a deliberate stare that was not wholly impolite.

"I think I can give you a small part, if you care to take it," he said. "It is n't much, but it 's a chance. I've been looking for some one of your style. What have you done?"

She narrated her experience in a few business-like words.

"We begin to rehearse on Monday," said Mr. Toland. "Come round at nine sharp. Show in the other one!" he added to his secretary.

The other one was a type better suited to Mr. Toland's personal preference, and, without betraying any of the mannerisms of the professional, had a "presence" that caught the Stage Director's fancy. She showed inexperience but not shyness in her manner, and was clad in a gown of gray and red that, as an expert in costume, Mr. Toland thoroughly approved. There was a merry light in the girl's eyes, and a dimple in her cheek that came and went, calling attention to a rare complexion. Her figure was gracile enough to prevent its seeming voluptuous, and her hands were remarkably fine, showing caste and cleverness.

"I came to see if you could give me a place in your company, Mr. Toland," she began. "But I have no experience and no introduction. I'd be willing to do anything — almost — except wear tights."

"We're not putting on a spectacle," he said, laughing. "What makes you want to go on the stage? It's a hard life, and it's discouraging. There are plenty of better things to do. Why do you think you can act?"

"Only because I want to," she replied.

"Well," he said good-naturedly, "I'll spare you the customary advice, for as a matter of fact I can use you. I have been wanting two women of certain types very much, and have been wondering where I'd find them. Miss Hepburn and you happen to just fill the bill, so you may consider yourself engaged. What name shall I put down?"

"Sally Hope, please," answered the new actress.

She left him and passed down the hall. Miss Hepburn was standing by the outer door.

"I got a position!" Sally exclaimed frankly.

Miss Hepburn turned to her, smiling with

a friendly look. I 'm *so* glad you did! I was hoping you 'd get in the company when I first saw you, for I knew I 'd like you."

"My name is Sally Hope; yours, Miss Hepburn, I know already. It 's nice of you to like me, for I feel the same way about you. But I 'm afraid of you, for you 've acted before, and I 've never even gone on, except in amateur theatricals."

"Oh, it 's easy enough, the beginning," said Miss Hepburn. "It's the getting your head above water, getting out of the crowd, that 's hard. I 'm always hoping I 'm going to do it, but it never comes. You see, I take my art pretty seriously."

"I don't," said Sally, "but I think it 's great fun."

"You won't get anywhere if you 're not in earnest," said Miss Hepburn.

"I 'm in earnest about wanting to get a good place to board and room, at any rate. It 's horribly expensive at my hotel. Do you know of any place to live?"

"Why don't you come up to my boarding-house? It 's on West Forty-Third Street, and it 's very convenient and very cheap. There 's

a room side of mine, and we might share the big one together. Do!"

"I believe I will!" said Sally. "You give me the address, and I'll move in this afternoon."

"Oh, you'd better see it first," was Miss Hepburn's cautious advice.

"Nonsense, I've confidence in you!" was the answer, and after a few moments of talk she left the theatre.

At five she appeared with her trunk, in a cab, at which extravagance Miss Hepburn gravely reproved her. "Why, I didn't know any other way of getting my box up!" said Sally.

She noticed that Miss Hepburn was differently dressed. At the manager's office she had flowered out in a brave attempt at style, though Sally had observed several inconsistencies in the effect. There was no such pretense now. The girl had on a faded French flannel shirtwaist and short skirt, both in a rather pitiful condition of wear. The lines showed a little plainer in her face, too, and she looked worn and tired.

"Let's come out and have dinner, before I

unpack," Sally suggested. "I saw a restaurant near here, on the avenue. Have you tried it?"

"You must have money in the bank!" said Miss Hepburn. "I have n't eaten in a restaurant for two months!"

"Why, where in the world *do* you eat?"

"Here in the room, of course. I 'll show you. I can make tea over the gas, and we 'll have some crackers and sardines."

"Oh, I say! let 's *really* eat to-night. I 've got fifty dollars!" said Sally.

"'Powdered pigs' bones and rhubarb glisters!'" cried Miss Hepburn. "Why, you 're a millionaire! Wherever did you get that much money? And to think of your getting a position the first time you tried!"

"Did n't you?"

Miss Hepburn smiled. "I 'll accept one dinner, just for to-night, to celebrate, and then I 'll tell you all about it. I see you 're an innocent. Fifty dollars! 'O, thou shalt lie in a bed stuffed with turtle's feathers and swoon in perfumed linen, like the fellow was smothered in roses!'"

"What in the world do you mean?" Sally asked in wonder.

"Oh, you must n't mind me, dear," was the reply. "I 'm simply daft about the Elizabethan dramatists. I 've managed to save my 'Mermaid' edition, and I 've read them so much I have them all on the tip of my tongue. If you hear me say anything particularly crazy, like 'ring-galliard,' it 's only Beaumont and Fletcher or John Webster."

"I guess I *am* innocent," Sally remarked. "I 've never even heard of them."

"They invented the English language — almost," said Miss Hepburn succinctly. "It 's my mania. My highest ideal is to revive 'The Duchess of Malfi.' Wait till you read it!" She struck a noble attitude and declaimed, —

"'*Shoot me to death with pearls — cut my throat with diamonds!*'" and then with a histrionic scorn, —

"'*Pshaw! Your pistols hold nothing but perfumes and kissing comfits!*' But are n't you going to change your clothes, first, though?"

"Why, no," Sally said; "I think this suit will do, won't it?"

"Is it really yours?" Miss Hepburn whispered, and then blushed furiously. "Oh, I forgot you had money," she added. "You see, I

borrowed all the clothes I could get, so I could present a good appearance to Mr. Toland. He thinks a lot of dress. I have n't a thing of my own I dared to wear!"

"You poor dear! But I don't think you 'll need rubbers," said Sally, seeing Miss Hepburn struggle with them.

Miss Hepburn turned pink again. "It looks like rain," she suggested. Then she turned an embarrassed face to Sally. "I have n't been able to afford new shoes, Sally, and these are worn right through the soles. I 've had to wear rubbers for three weeks! Oh, you don't know! I hope you 'll never know, dear, what it is to be up against it in little old New York. Never mind, we 've got an engagement at last! Fifteen a week, Sally, think of that! It 's opulence! 'I feel a stark, affrighted motion in my blood' just to think of it. That 's from 'The Maid's Tragedy' — I came pretty near to having one myself! 'A kind of healthful joy wanders in me!' Same play. Come on, let 's eat! Then we 'll talk and talk and talk, Sally; you 'll talk, too — 'I 'll ne'er believe a silent woman; when they break out they are bonfires!' — Beaumont and Fletcher, my

dear; you 'll get used to my rigmarole, after a while."

Emily Hepburn had an intense, determined way of talking that compelled attention. At dinner she kept Sally amused at her advice, for she had had sufficient experience on the stage to know what to expect.

"You must n't mind what actresses say, for they 're mostly all cats," said Emily. "Cats is n't exactly the word, either — I call them 'scroyles.' Scroyle is Elizabethan, of course, 'rare old Ben Jonson's' pet word, I think — oh, *he* was the boy for invective! — and it can't be translated. I do hope you won't be a scroyle, Sally. They laugh at you if you scatter your powder, and they guy your make-up, and they lie about when rehearsals are called, so you 'll be late, and they wheedle the stage manager, or try to. I try not to be a scroyle, but it 's awfully hard, when all the others are."

"What are *you*, then?" Sally asked.

"'She 's a delicate dab-chick, I must have her!' — that 's what I try to be. You 'll find it in 'The Alchemist,' if you look."

"I 'm sure you 're a dab-chick, Emily," said Sally.

"And now," Emily began, after dinner was done, "if you want to hear it, I 'll tell you what you escaped. I came to New York two years ago with a letter to a star, and got a place right away. But she fell ill in two months, the piece closed, and from that day to this I have n't had a position for more than two weeks at a time. I 've tried everything, vaudeville even, and gone to manager after manager, and been thrown down everywhere. My money gave out early in the game, and then I really don't know what I *did n't* try. I studied shorthand and typewriting, and got a place, but I simply *could n't* give up acting. I 'd rather fail on the stage than succeed anywhere else. I 've worked in a restaurant (the only time I ever have had really enough food in two years), but I left that to try for a place in Boston. I 've been a telephone girl and a parlor maid, and tried reporting, and worked in a dentist's office. In between, I 've tried and tried and tried, sometimes succeeding in getting on for a week or so, and then something would always happen. The last two months have been the worst, though. I could n't get anything to do, and I 've read in the library till my eyes ached, and then, just to keep my-

self from going crazy, I used to go into department stores and try on cloaks and wraps and things, and pretend I could n't be suited. But I never once admitted the possibility of giving it all up. Meanwhile, I've read every play I could get hold of, and I could go on in any Shakespearian production at a day's notice, I think. I 've read up costume and history besides, so as to be sure of myself when I did get a chance. And now I 'm going on at the McCabe as 'extra woman'! Is n't it ridiculous? But I don't care, if I've got it in me, it'll come out, sooner or later. Look at the way Duse suffered! I have n't gone through half what she did. 'Hell, to her affliction was mere snow water,' if you 'll allow me to misquote 'The White Devil.' There 's only one thing I need, and that 's fencing. I don't know how to fence, and it might be necessary. I can dance a little already, and sing fairly well."

Emily Hepburn's lessons in economy were received with interest by her *protégée*, for Sally was consistently extravagant in everything. As she was well equipped with clothes, and the two girls were of about the same size, she insisted upon sharing her wardrobe with Emily, at least

until their salaries should commence. In return Emily coached her in season and out of season for her first appearance.

The first "reading through" of the play and assignment of parts was exciting for a novice, though the girls had scarcely more than a line or two apiece. Emily, after the rehearsal, insisted upon reading her lines over and over to Sally, with an earnestness that amused the beginner.

The rehearsals progressed, and Sally soon lost her timidity in her study of stage-land and the stage-folk. Easily first in her notice was Mr. Walter Blackfield, the "juvenile lead."

He was young, and in his way as enthusiastic as Emily Hepburn. He had a bright, boyish face, with a square, nicked chin, and curly black hair. His habitual expression was a frown, almost threatening, but of a sudden, after a direct stare, his face would crinkle into a smile so abandoned and hearty, that it was almost a match for Sally's, when she half closed her eyes and dimpled into gleefulness.

Chance threw the two together in the wings, one day, after a long, tedious siege of rehearsal, decidedly trying to Mr. Toland. The stage

director had just vented his temper on the juvenile lead.

"Bah!" said Walter Blackfield to Sally, "he's a rogue, a foist, a hodmontod, an iper, a trindle-tale, a dogfish, leech, caterpillar, a pumpion, and a pernicious, petticoat prince!"

Sally smiled up at him and remarked, "He's a scroyle, too, is n't he?"

He gave her a frowning glance, then his face exploded in a smile. "What do *you* know about scroyles, Miss Hope?" he demanded in surprise.

"I think I *am* one," she replied.

At this moment he was called on the stage, and Sally saw no more of him that day. But after the girls got home, Emily said, —

"D' you know, I rather like Mr. Blackfield; I think he can act. I 'd like to play opposite him. He would n't do tricks, I 'm sure. Did you see how Mr. Dowey has been acting? You watch him on the first night, and see if in that scene with Miss Max in the second act he does n't get up stage and force her to turn her back on the audience, so he 'll get the benefit of all his lines while she 's eclipsed. *He's* a scroyle, all right! But Blackfield is a gentle-

man. I 'm sure he has talent, and he 'll go far. Oh, dear! 'He has a tongue will tame tempests and make the wild rocks wanton!' — 'Two Noble Kinsmen,' Sally; you certainly ought to read it!"

. . . . . .

The opening night had passed successfully enough with its suspense, its hysteria, its nervous strain, and the piece was fairly launched, when Mr. Toland, breathing freer, called for an "understudy rehearsal" to assign the parts. Emily Hepburn was anxious. While Sally had been enjoying herself behind the scenes, talking with every one, from the scene-shifters and firemen to the star (for few could resist her, and rules were lax at the McCabe), Emily had used her ears and her eyes well, watching every piece of business and the reading of every line, critical of everything. With Sally's help she had made out a fair costume from odds and ends of her room-mate's wardrobe; but Sally herself, trim and elegant, had made a much better impression. It was a wonder to Emily how Sally, willing to take such a poor position, could afford such gowns, but Sally had not thought it necessary to explain her circum-

stances. Many things about Sally worried her friend — her frivolity, her apparent selfishness, her constant refusal to take her art seriously, and the hopelessness of her capacity. Yet every one seemed to like the girl, and Emily herself liked her more and more, despite her faults. This affection, however, was in great danger when the understudy parts were given out.

Mr. Toland was no exception to the rest in his liking for Sally Hope, and Sally was quick to take advantage of it. In the understudy cast, both Emily Hepburn and Sally Hope were given the ingénue's part. He looked up, as he read the list, and Sally said calmly, —

"Of course I 'm to be first understudy, Mr. Toland? You know I can dress the part and wear my clothes, though I have n't so much experience as Miss Hepburn."

Mr. Toland nodded.

Emily took this calmly enough, though the blow hurt her.

After the rehearsals began, she said, "Sally, I 've been watching Miss Max pretty sharply, and I can see a good many places where it could be improved. She could make a lot more of

that business with the handkerchief, and several times she turns her head at the wrong time, so as to spoil the laugh she ought to get. When we get home, I 'll show you."

She went over the part, which they both knew well, and explained her improvements. The next morning, at the rehearsal of the understudies, when her time came, Sally boldly adopted these changes.

"Why, that's bully, Miss Hope!" Mr. Toland exclaimed; "where did you get that idea?"

"Oh, it just came to me, in thinking it over," said Sally.

"It 's all right; I 'll suggest it to Miss Max," said the stage director.

"Sally, you 're a scroyle, I 'm afraid," said Emily, as they went home.

Sally smiled and made no reply.

This was as far as Emily went, no matter what temptation she had to protest. She permitted Sally to use more than her share of the dressing-room they occupied together, lent her make-up, and cleared her litter away, indulgently accepting all Sally's impositions as a matter of course. Harder to forgive was Sally's

overt flirtation with Mr. Blackfield, who by this time had progressed considerably in familiarity. Emily felt a sense of responsibility in regard to her friend, and feared many things she dared not suggest.

One afternoon Mr. Blackfield's card was brought up to her room in the boarding-house. As the girls used the larger room for a sitting-room, she sent for the gentleman to come up.

"I 'm sorry Miss Hope is n't in, this afternoon, Mr. Blackfield," she said, "but she said she had to go over to Brooklyn."

"That 's funny," he answered; "she said particularly that she 'd be at home, and asked me to call."

"Oh, well, then, perhaps she 'll come in. Won't you wait awhile?"

"Thanks, I will. But I 'm afraid she *is* a scroyle!"

Miss Hepburn sat up, suddenly attentive. "I beg your pardon?" she said.

"Oh, that 's only one of her words, Miss Hepburn; no insult intended. For my part, I consider her a 'delicate dab-chick.'"

Emily Hepburn became intense, and when she was intense, she was quite another person.

Mr. Blackfield took his turn at being surprised at her manner now, when she said, "*You* know 'The Alchemist'?"

"Well, *rather!*" was the hearty response, and his frown of bewilderment changed to his compelling smile. "Shall I 'spit out secrets like hot custard,' my 'smock rampant'?"

"You! *You!*" was all she could say. "And poor Sally! Has she been trying Elizabethan quotations on you? 'Though she had practiced seven years in the pest-house, she could not have done quaintlier'!"

"'I feel a stark affrighted motion in my blood,'" he went on, taking up her quotation. "I knew she had them all second-hand, you may be sure. So *you're* the real, original Elizabethan enthusiast, are you? 'You, my most neat and cunning orator, whose tongue is quicksilver?' Ah, 'green goose, you're now in sippets'!"

"Mr. Blackfield," said Emily, in a mock tragic humor, 'were all the gods in parliament, I'd burst their silence with my importunity!' I did n't know any one but professors and students ever read Webster nowadays! Will you play Ferdinand to my Duchess of Malfi?"

"'O excellent hyena,' I will!" was his enthusiastic reply.

And at that rate the conversation was maintained with Elizabethan enthusiasm for a couple of hours, till Sally appeared with pink cheeks and a smile.

"Well, I thought you two would get on all right alone," was all the explanation she condescended to offer. Emily's reproaches, however, were mild, and even Mr. Blackfield did not seem unforgivably disappointed.

He called often after that, and usually Sally was away.

One day Emily came to her radiant. "What d' you think?" she exclaimed. "To-day I had a call from a professor of fencing, who offered to give me a course of lessons free! He said he's a stranger in the city, and wants to introduce himself that way. But I find he's very well known indeed; in fact, he's the best in New York. What d' you suppose it means, anyway?"

"I should n't worry about that. If he wants you so much, I 'd let him teach me. You said you wanted to learn, did n't you?" said Sally.

"I wish he would take *you!*" said Emily.

"Oh, I don't want to fence! It's as stupid as Ben Jonson to me!"

"Sally! How *can* you! Why, Mr. Blackfield and I read the whole of 'Volpone' yesterday. It's lovely! How any one can bear those stupid mechanical obvious old comedies like 'She Stoops to Conquer,' I don't see."

"I suppose if I were in love, I would enjoy reading the Encyclopædia Britannica," said Sally, and Emily blushed fiercely.

"By the way," she added carelessly, "how would you dress Dulcie's part, if you were going to costume it? I don't like Miss Max's gown, do you?"

"No — it's something fearful!" said Emily. "What I'd like, in the ball scene, would be an Adrienne Lecouvreur costume, of silver cloth studded with turquoises, with a tunic of the same material and a long train of silver lace embroidered with turquoise and lined with silver. Then I'd have a crown of turquoises and pearls and a necklace, and wear my hair in two braids falling in front, entwined with turquoises. But I suppose Mr. Toland would have something to say about that! 'She came in like starlight,

hid in jewels!' That's a good description of my idea of a costume — by the Ben Jonson whom you think is so stupid." She went off into a reverie at the fancy.

It happened that not long after, Mr. Blackfield called, and finding Emily away, came up to have a little talk with Sally. He too was full of enthusiasm for his profession, as earnest as Emily herself, and his boyish ardor was quite delightful to Sally. This time he was all seriousness, and his frown did not for a time disappear. Finally, after some innocuous talk, he ventured: —

"I say, Miss Hope, don't you think you could improve your part a little if you should play up a bit more? You know, in that character you 're supposed to have no end of money. Now you act only just your natural self, and no one would ever suppose you had a cent to your name. You ought to *show* it more. Of course your natural self is charming, but life is n't art. You ought to think of it."

"I never thought of that," Sally admitted. "How *do* rich people behave, anyway? Of course, on a salary of fifteen dollars a week, I can't very well know, you know."

"I can't describe it exactly, but if you should watch the people on Fifth Avenue, and driving in the Park, you 'd see what I mean. I saw a girl in a red automobile the other day who reminded me of you a good deal — if you could only get *her* manner!"

"But there 's one other thing I wanted to speak to you about," he added. "You won't mind, will you?"

"Of course not, silly!" said Sally. "What is it?"

"Well, are n't you a little bit unkind and inconsiderate with Emily?" he asked fearfully. "She has never said a word to me, but it does seem as if you were a little selfish sometimes. What d' you think about it yourself?"

"I suppose I am," Sally admitted. "But how can you tell whether people are really worth while or not until you 've tried them? Now I happen to know, by this time, that Emily 's solid gold, but if I had n't sometimes been mean and horrid, I 'd never be sure. Emily 's a gentleman, that 's what *she* is."

"And what are you, then?" he said. "Suppose she should try *you!*"

"Oh, I 'm a scroyle! I 'm selfish, I know,

but I 've learned a lot by it. Do you think Emily will ever make an actress ? "

" An actress ! Why, she 'll go clear to the top, don't you feel certain of that ? What a great actress needs is simply intelligence. It 's the hardest thing to find there is. Emily has got that, and she is capable of hard work, too. I never saw any one so in earnest. If you 'd only take a lesson from her and not fritter away your time having fun and foolishness, and observe things a little closer, you 'd be an actress yourself. But you 're a scatter-brain, I 'm afraid."

" I 'm afraid I am, Mr. Blackfield ; I can't take it a bit seriously. Everything and everybody amuses me too much."

" That 's just it! You 're too amused. If you 'd only use your brains more — you surely have brains. Why, only the other day I heard you laughing at Papa Holden's clothes — he was terribly hurt. But what d' you think ? He told me last night that he had had sent him three whole new suits of clothes besides a dress suit! He has n't the least idea where they all came from, but he 's kept the stage door for so long that no doubt some actor that 's made good has remembered him. He 's as pleased as Punch !

You won't have a chance to laugh at *him* any more, at any rate!"

"Poor old Papa! I'm glad for him," said Sally, "but I'm always sorry to lose a laugh. I'll be sorry when I have to stop laughing at *you*, Mr. Blackfield."

"Why should you laugh at me, please?" he inquired.

"Why not? Are n't you in love with Emily?"

"'I do love that witch very constrainedly,'" he quoted.

"And you don't know that your photograph is in her mirror — the only one there?"

"By Jove!" he exclaimed; "is it, now?"

"Go in and see!" said Sally. "Being a scroyle, I don't at all mind giving her away."

He ventured in, and came back with his frown deepened. "'O, thou abominable, loathsome gargarism'!" he exclaimed. "It was n't mine at all! It was another man's!"

Sally laughed. "That will pay you for your vanity, sir!" she said, "and if you 're wise, it will give you a valuable tip. I advise you to hurry up!"

. . . . . .

The play had run only three weeks, when, one afternoon about two o'clock, a messenger appeared at the boarding-house with a note from Mr. Toland to Miss Sally Hope, informing her that Miss Max had met with a severe accident, which would prevent her playing her part for some days. Miss Hope was to come downtown at four and go over the part with the Stage Director before dinner, so that he could see that she was able to play it that night.

Sally sat down and wrote two letters, sent them off by the boy, and then showed Mr. Toland's message to Emily. Both girls had, of course, understudied the part and were competent to take it, but though Miss Hepburn's talent was indubitably greater, Sally's air and popularity had won. Emily was as interested, however, as if the summons had come for her. She congratulated Sally warmly, and there was no hypocrisy evident in her tone.

"Now, Sally," she went on, "you must make a hit to-night, and I 'm going to show you how. I 've studied that part till I know every possibility in it, and there are loads of ways you can improve on it. It 's the chance

of a lifetime; and think of it, you 're really only an amateur! Oh, I *do* hope you 'll make good — of course you will, for every one loves to watch you, whatever you do! Now sit down, and I 'll go over the whole thing with you, and show you just what can be done."

For two hours the two girls studied together, and all Emily's hints were illuminating. She grew excited, far more than did Sally, at the prospect of the evening's success. The enthusiasm of it sent the color to her cheeks, and when she stood up and explained the fine points of the ingénue's business, she threw her whole heart into the endeavor. Sally attempted again and again to stop her, and showed a lack of interest that shocked her room-mate. Finally, when Sally gave up the study rather languidly, making slight pretense of her boredom, Emily broke down and burst into tears. Sally turned then, with her brows uplifted.

"Why, what 's the matter, Emily?" she said.

"You have such a chance!" the girl wept, "a chance that any girl would give a year's salary to have! You can get your head above water to-night, perhaps become famous! Many

a woman has been, from just such a fortunate accident as this! There may be managers there to-night who 'll see you. You may be given a better part in the next play, at least! Oh, and you don't *half* appreciate it. You don't care for your art enough even to make an effort to try! You might go on and carry the whole thing with you! If you only cared! If you only had enthusiasm!"

"Oh, pshaw, Emily, you take things too seriously," Sally replied. "I 'll do my best to-night, don't you worry about it. You 'll see! I 'll play up! I have some ideas of my own I 've had up my sleeve, and they 'll make a hit, even with you; you see if they don't!"

And she went off downtown to see Mr. Toland.

She came back in high spirits, full of a suppressed excitement. But she would not talk, her one expostulatory remark being a quotation from "The Maid's Tragedy," which she had caught from Emily.

"'This is no place to brabble in,' Emily. Please don't make me brabble, for I don't feel like it! You 'll be satisfied when the time comes, dear!"

At half past six the two started out together for the theatre, but before they had walked a block Sally stopped and said: —

"Oh, Emily, I forgot to take my watch! I 'm going to run back and get it. You need n't wait for me."

"But the *idea*, Sally!" Emily protested; "you must n't run any risk of being late to-night. Let me go, won't you, if you must have it?"

"No, you run along. I 'll take a cab if necessary," Sally said decidedly, and turned back without waiting to discuss the matter further.

Emily walked on. She paused to bid Papa Holden a good-evening, and he asked her, —

"Where's Miss Hope? Mr. Toland has been howling for her!"

"Oh, she 'll be right along," said Emily. "She just went back for a moment."

The doorkeeper shook his head mournfully. "You ought to have that part, Miss Hepburn. You could make a big thing out of it!"

"I hope Sally will," was her reply.

She passed up to the little dressing-room and began to take off her things. Fifteen minutes went by — twenty. Then came a peremptory knock at the door. Mr. Toland appeared.

"Has n't Miss Hope turned up yet?" he demanded.

Emily, anxious herself by this time, explained all she knew.

"Well, I 'll give her ten minutes more!" he said.

It was already half past seven. For the first time the thought came to Emily what Sally's absence might mean to herself. She stifled the hope it brought, hated herself for the envy of it, and waited.

Mr. Toland appeared again, a messenger with a huge box behind him.

"You 'll go on and take the part, Miss Hepburn! I 've waited as long as I can. Hurry up, and I 'll have Miss Max's costume sent in here, and the wardrobe woman will do what she can for you. Hello, what 's this?" He turned angrily to the boy.

"A package for Miss Hepburn," said the boy.

In an instant, Miss Hepburn understood. How or why, she did not know, nor did she attempt any explanation to herself, but as she tore open the package, she was sure what it would contain. Beneath the tissue paper lay

the costume she had described, all silver and turquoise, sparkling in the light. Under this, in a leather case, shimmering on a velvet bed, were the crown and necklace, the latter a river of pearls breaking into pools of dull blue gems. There was no card, no note, no explanation of any kind. But Miss Hepburn had scant time for wonder. All this splendor was for the end of the play. She put down the dress as one might lay a baby to rest, and dressed in a fever for the first act.

She went down to the stage with her head swimming, and attempted to listen to Mr. Toland's final instructions, though her mind was dizzy with the surprise of her fortune. She rallied, however, to meet Mr. Blackfield.

"Oh, is n't it *bully!*" he cried wildly. "By Jove, you look like the 'White Devil' to-night, Emily! I 'm so glad you 're going on instead of that little scroyle of a Sally!"

"Oh, don't say that, Walter!" she pleaded. "She 's not! I 'm sure she 's not! There 's something so mysterious about all this that I can't think straight — but I have a sort of a glimmering of an idea — and it 's going to be a big surprise, somehow. I can't explain, I 'm too

confused." She turned to him as if in a daze, and added, "'Is not this a fantastic house we are in, and all we do a dream'?"

"Why, you're not afraid, are you, Emily? You won't lose your nerve, will you?"

"I am afraid, yes, of something too good to be true, Walter. But I'm not going to lose my nerve — I'm going to get my head above water; and d'you know, I'm sure Sally's helping me."

"I wish she'd help *me* a bit," he murmured.

She shot a quick glance at him. "So you were afraid of my brother's picture?" she laughed. He had no time to answer, for just then came his cue.

She followed him in a few moments, and from the instant she appeared, she held every eye. Miss Max had done well enough, every one thought, but Mr. Toland in the first entrance opened his eyes to see how Emily Hepburn carried herself. He was no less startled to hear the applause she received. Just then the manager appeared behind him.

"What's up, anyway?" he demanded. "There's certainly something doing, the house was sold out at eight o'clock. First time we've

had the S. R. O. sign up since the piece opened. Who 's that girl, anyway? What are they roaring about in front?"

"Watch her," said Toland. "By Jove, I had no idea she had it in her! She 's carrying the whole play; and to think I gave the part to Miss Hope! Left us in the lurch, too, damn her!"

"Who are all those flowers for?" he asked, as boy after boy passed up the stairs to the dressing-rooms.

"Miss Hepburn, sir," said a stage hand. "There are half-a-dozen boxes from Thorley's there."

"I never knew we had such an attraction," said the manager.

At the end of the first act the flowers began to come over the footlights. It was against the rule at McCabe's, but there were so many, and so persistently forced, that the ushers were obliged to hand them up. Miss Hepburn was called out by name several times. She was trembling now, with an air that no one had seen before with her. The star was glowering, and in the wings there was a murmur of comment from the actors.

Emily came off at last, and once off, nearly fainted. Mr. Toland came up and said a few words that revived her. She ran upstairs, escaping lightly the congratulations of the company, and began hurriedly to dress for the second act. When she came out, Walter Blackfield met her on the stairs.

"Before I tell you how wonderful you are — tell me, did you mean what you said? May I ask you now? You've set me on fire, Emily! Tell me now what to expect! I can't wait!"

"'We're passionately met in this sad world'!" she laughed. By this time she had lost her fear and was reveling in the ecstasy of a double, perhaps a triple happiness. To make good in her part was joy enough for her; to heighten it, intoxicate it with Walter Blackfield's love, was almost too much.

But he insisted upon an answer, barring her way downstairs. She laid her hand on his.

"Don't wake me out of my dream," she said. "I am walking on air. If I succeed this night, if I make a hit, — *you'll* win too!" Then she ran past him and took her place in the wings.

There was another storm when she appeared.

The tumult was, she thought, ridiculous, but it was a part of the dream. She paid no attention to it, for this was her best scene, and she swept into it tingling, rapt. It was not till there came a lull in her action that, through the open wings, she saw members of the company pointing and gesticulating. She turned at her first opportunity, and almost for the first time looked into the house. She began with the stage box, and there her eyes stopped.

There Sally sat, like a queen enthroned, sparkling with jewels, smiling, with her lids half dropped, applauding at every laugh. Beside her sat a young man with a small black mustache. The two had just come in, and already the company thrilled as with a shock of electricity. The tempo of the piece quickened; it went now with gusto. The star herself became infected with the excitement, and her comedy soared. Every one played to the stage box, every one wondered and whispered. There came another wave of applause at the end of the act, and again the stage was besieged with roses. It did not seem as if there could be so many American Beauties in town. Emily was nearly terrified with her success.

The last intermission was short, and gave her scarcely time to change her costume. Then, as she stood there before the glass gazing at herself transformed, the wonder and the mystery reached a crisis. The gems were genuine, the costume had been made expressly for her, Sally Hope was responsible for the full house, the applause, the flowers that now almost crowded her out of her own dressing-room! Then *who* was Sally Hope?

She flew down to the stage, dispatched a note to the box, and went on, "like starlight, hid in jewels." She was indeed playing "opposite" Walter now, and playing hard, playing her heart against his, and playing to an audience of one. She did not hear the applause, she saw only Walter and Sally, and she saw that Sally understood.

At the end, as the curtain fell and rose, Walter turned to her and whispered, —

"Now! Are you satisfied with your triumph? Will you give me mine?"

She clasped his hand tighter and smiled an answer.

At this moment Miss Hope arose from her seat and flung her corsage bouquet of orchids

fair over the footlights. Walter ran for it, and rescued it just as the heavy act-drop fell.

"Who is she?" he cried. "Who is she, anyway?"

"I sent her a note round by the front," Emily said. "I wrote, '"O, thou hast been a most prodigious comet!" Who are you?' Here 's a card — let 's see what it says." She turned to the light. It read, "Sally, the Scroyle!"

"Ah," said Walter, "'they talk of Jupiter — he 's but a squib-cracker to her!' — 'Ten such camphire constitutions would call again the Golden Age in question'!"

"Oh," Emily breathed warmly, "is n't she 'a lasting mine of joy'?"

"No, that 's *you*, sweetheart!" he protested, as he bore her away. Then, just before the company captured her, he cried, "'I have a new soul in me, made of a North Wind'!"

III

The Whaup and the Whimbrel

JUST what turned Miss Million's interest towards the hardware business, I don't know, unless it was some chance remark of mine to the effect that hardware stores were always busy. She set me, at any rate, to find an interesting one, and it was my description of Mr. John Gow, given somewhat trivially at his expense, that induced her to experiment next at Deacon Brothers'.

She obtained the position, not without some trouble, and went immediately and enthusiastically to work at what would, to most, prove the dullest possible employment.

As Stella Delafield, I saw her at times while she was in her cashier's window, and as Miss Million of California, nearly every evening in her apartment on East Fifty-Eighth Street. It was pretty hard work for her, but the excitement of the game kept her up wonderfully; and on Sundays, she rested herself with automobile trips, usually in my company.

I was able to assist her in many ways through this adventure, buying the weapons she presented to the Whaup, leading him indirectly to his Harlem flat, and in other minor matters.

It was not until two years later, after this period of adventure was over, that she again saw the Whaup and the Whimbrel; but meanwhile, even during her other adventures, Miss Million kept, through me, in constant touch with their lives.

The Whaup and the Whimbrel

DEACON BROTHERS' was like any other big, downtown hardware store; as animated with busy clerks and impatient customers, as crowded with heterogeneous stock, as choked with fascinating tools, machines, and materials in every aisle and passage. Underfoot, scattered papers, pasteboard boxes, nails, strings, and tags; overhead, tiers of shelves and drawers, filled with hinges, locks, and fittings, each with its sample wired to the outside. In front of the shop were the great show-windows, filled with cunning, glistening implements, where beyond the plate-glass, the traffic of the city roared. In the rear was the square, cavernous doorway, high above the sidewalk, where brawling teamsters toiled at heavy cases which creaked and hurtled. Halfway between the two was an annex to the main store, a labyrinth of dim, narrow alleys, leading to unexpected store-rooms for paints and brushes, ship chandlery, or wire and metals.

Through all this confusion was woven, like a spider's web, a radial system of wires, converging at the cashier's window. Along these airy tracks the carriers sped, to stop with a snap above the cashier's head, waiting for her to make change and shoot them back along the pulsing, singing wire.

For a week there had been a new electricity in the air of Deacon Brothers' store. For a week a new face, more demurely coquettish than any of its predecessors, had been seen at the cashier's window. For a week the salesmen had made unnecessary errands to the office, and had departed smiling. So far, there had been at least two mistakes in making change every day, also ; but no one, not even old Mr. Deacon, seemed to care.

The new cashier was quaint and incongruous, the one spot of color in the establishment, and differed from previous occupants of the window by many signs. She never wore paper cuffs, though her fresh shirtwaists often were adorned with delicate laces or embroideries at the neck and wrists. One missed, too, the black, soiled service apron which former cashiers were wont to affect, and the pencil stuck in the hair. No

jangle of jewelry or flash of showy ornaments came from the little cage.

Miss Stella Delafield came with the evident belief that nails were sold by the dozen, and hinges by the pound. She did not know the difference between a hasp and a door-jamb, or butts from escutcheon pins. Yet her inexperience was so distractingly original, and her desire to learn so charmingly avid, that the shipping-clerk had spent entire noon hours in teaching her the terminology of the craft. He explained laboriously the difference between the teeth of a cross-cut and a ripping saw, the distinctions of bits and augers and gimlets, the characteristics of cut nails, wire nails, and clinch nails, and screws of sorts. He had awakened her mind to a knowledge of rat-tail files and rivets — but Miss Delafield still had much to learn.

She did not need any instructor, however, in her study of human nature. Here she was an adept, alert and sapient. Her interest was so keen that it was not long before she was sympathizing with the errand boy in his troubles at night-school, and advising the shipping-clerk what to give his sister for a birthday present. She did not talk much, but watched everything

that passed, often smiling suddenly, with a quick glee that half closed her hazel eyes, and set two dimples dancing in her cheeks.

The bookkeeper, John Gow, standing at a desk beside the cashier, had ample opportunity for watching Miss Delafield, and not seldom, with a good-natured pity for her innocence, for correcting her mistakes. During the hours when business was slack, he found many chances to talk to her and to supplement the commercial education which the shipping-clerk had begun. For this kindness he soon received an unexpected reward. Miss Delafield, being one of those rare spirits with the power of conferring sobriquets, had during the first week nominated him "the Whaup."

John Gow had never before possessed a nickname, and he accepted this distinguishing honor with a pathetic pleasure. He was shy and reticent and awkward, always a laughing-stock for his associates, but as inevitably their refuge in times of financial trouble, for he was as generous as he was absurd. He was a strange, anæmic, freckled youth, and not, in point of fact, unlike the curlew or great whaup of Miss Delafield's sprightly fancy. He had a pale

thatch of auburn hair, pale blue protruding eyes, a large, curved nose, and a long neck remarkable for the Adam's apple which rose and fell as he talked. His figure was consistently long and angular, and he came to the office perpetually clad in a wrinkled pepper-and-salt suit, always changing his coat for a thin, shiny black one, whose sleeves were so short that his hands protruded from them like the talons of a bird. Seriously intent upon his accounts, he seemed as colorless and commonplace a hack as ever added a column of figures; but when he smiled, showing a line of strong, even teeth, white as snow, there was a gentle lovableness about his face that gave it an active charm.

As time went on, the Whaup, emboldened by Miss Delafield's good nature, made shy advances in familiarity. For a while he treated her to the embarrassed favors a primary school child might show his teacher, presenting her with pictorial calendars, little advertising notebooks, or even half pounds of cheap chocolates. These she accepted with such apparent pleasure that he ventured still farther from his shell of reserve, and invited her to share his lunches with him in the Annex.

Here she found him, one day, as she was exploring with curiosity the unknown passages of the store. She also had brought her luncheon, and ate it as she strolled — half a broiled duck, an egg with mayonnaise, asparagus, long out of season, and a little pot of Bar-le-Duc. She came unexpectedly upon him, as he was seated on a coil of rope amongst the anchors and pulleys, chewing at a graham sandwich, and reading from a book. She sat down upon a keg of nails beside him, and he put his reading away lingeringly.

"Did you ever read 'The Three Guardsmen'?" he asked, with his friendly smile.

Miss Delafield nodded, and her smile was as engaging as his.

"Say, it's a great book, is n't it? D'Artagnan was a dandy! That's the kind of man I'd like to be. I often wonder what he'd do if he came to New York."

"He'd probably be a policeman," said Miss Delafield.

The Whaup smiled almost patronizingly, as if she were a very little girl. Then he looked up at a dusty, cobwebbed window with an intent, far-away gaze. "I don't suppose you can

understand what I mean," he said; "nobody seems to be able to. I 'm a kind of a crank about it, I suppose, but I believe there 's just as much romance in the world nowadays as there was then."

"Nobody ever has adventures nowadays, except criminals," said Miss Delafield. "Did *you* ever have one, Whaup?"

"No," he said; the word was long drawn out and plaintive. "It does n't seem possible in a city, does it? Everybody 's too busy selling things and making money. But things do happen out West all the time!"

"Why don't you go out there and try it, then?" Miss Delafield had not taken her eyes from the Whaup's wistful face.

"Gosh! I 'd like to," he cried. "But it takes more money than I 've got. Perhaps I may get there some day, though. I know just what I 'd do. I 'd go to the Black Hills. But I wish I had a gun — I 'd need it there, sure. I 'm crazy about knives and firearms."

"Say," he added, "I saw a girl driving an automobile in the Park, last Sunday, and she looked so much like you that it might have been your sister. Is n't it funny that people

like that, who do have money — all they want — don't do something interesting with it, instead of spending it just like everybody else? Think what a girl like that could do, if she wanted to have fun with Destiny — if she only had imagination! Why does n't she travel or do something different? Rich people are always so stupid!"

"I suppose it would be 'different' to her if she had to work for her living in a place like this. Think how that might amuse an automobile girl with money!"

"Oh, pshaw!" said the Whaup. "Fancy romance in a hardware store! It 's impossible. It 's absurd!"

He rose to go back to his desk with the far-away look still in his pale blue eyes. Stella's hazel eyes were still eager and amused. They seemed always to be amused at something. She watched the Whaup, now, more closely than ever, but he did not notice it. Over his desk hung the advertising calendar of some manufacturer of firearms, an exciting, highly colored picture of a frontier scout surrounded by Indians. Whenever the Whaup did look up from his work, it was usually at this. That

afternoon, during a lull in her work, he gave it an absorbed gaze, and then, leaning towards her window, he whispered breathlessly, —

"What would *you* do, if a wonderful, beautiful woman in Russian sables and diamonds should rush up to you, while you were walking up Broadway, and thrust a hot buttered roll into your hand, snip off the second button of your jacket with a little pair of scissors, and say 'Parallelogram!' and run down a cross-street, looking back over her shoulder as if she were frightened?"

"I 'd scream for help," said the cashier.

The Whaup turned to his ledger with a look of disappointment.

"What would *you* do?" Stella added.

The Whaup looked at her very seriously. "I don't know," he said. "It 's been worrying me all the afternoon. It would be terrible to have an adventure like that, and then not be able to follow it up."

"You 're not a whaup at all," said the cashier; "you 're a goose!"

A few days after that, he came into the office and greeted Miss Delafield excitedly. "Say," he began, "three times this week I 've met

a man coming across Union Square with a pretty girl who was crying. I 've a good mind to take a day off, next time, and shadow them ! "

" You 'd better stick to your hammers and turning-lathes and brass knobs," the cashier replied. " I see by the paper that there 's a hardware trust being formed, and that prices on all building materials are going up. I wonder if our firm is in it ? "

" Oh, I 'm so sick of the hardware business, it does n't interest me at all," said the Whaup. " I consider this office life merely a dream. I only really live after business hours, at night. Say, I 've got a great game ! It 's bully fun. Last night I pretended that I was the Duke of Cornwall, traveling incognito, and I walked all over the West Side looking for adventures. I did n't find a single open door, though, nor any beckoning girls or anything — only a drunken man who called me ' Charlie ; ' but it was fun, anyway. If I had only had the money, I 'll bet I could have *made* things happen. To-night I think I 'll go down on the Bowery and ask every policeman I meet if he 's seen my runaway wife, and see what they say."

Scarcely a day passed without some such manifestation of the Whaup's secret passion for romance. The cashier listened interestedly to each new story, and faithfully kept his confidence. Sometimes the two, after hurrying through a luncheon together, would spend what time was left of their noon hour walking the downtown streets. On these excursions the Whaup's picturesque, agile fancy regaled her with many impromptu inventions, interpreting the matter-of-fact incidents they witnessed in terms of the most deliciously thrilling adventure. Together they followed interesting pedestrians, or paused to eavesdrop at the conversations of waiting groups, or picked possible heroes and heroines from amongst the passers-by. They visited pawnshops, and he made up for her strange stories of unredeemed pledges.

Invariably their itinerary included a stop at the show-windows of a gun-shop in the vicinity, where the envious Whaup would gloat over the display of weapons, and descant upon the merits of Colt's 44's and magazine pistols. He noticed every change in the arrangement of the stock, and knew something of every item in its collection.

The cashier made occasional tours of investigation downtown on her own account, leaving the Whaup in the Annex alone with his book. She used at these times to patronize a dairy-lunch place a few blocks away, and it was at this little restaurant Stella met the young woman whom, with her customary pleasure in giving nicknames, she immediately dubbed "the Whimbrel."

Brown eyes had the Whimbrel, and fine, satiny, brown hair, trimly dressed without regard to the shop-girl's usual idea of style. Her little round face was still childlike and pearl-pink, save when, blushing furiously on slight cause, it was suffused with carmine. She had an habitual timid, wondering expression, and her small red lips, usually half opened, showed a straight line of little blue-white teeth, and occasionally a dainty, pointed tongue.

She was so conscientious in her work, and so interested in it, so willing to advise her customers in regard to their orders, so careful not to spill one drop of coffee into the saucer, that Miss Delafield became interested in her at once. Usually coming late, she often had time for a short conversation with the little waitress, and

before long the acquaintance grew into a more active friendship. The cashier sometimes waited for the Whimbrel until the dairy had closed, and walked uptown with her. At these times it was always the Whimbrel who talked, and Miss Delafield who listened attentively.

One day, as the two girls were thus homeward bound, the Whimbrel suddenly seized Miss Delafield's arm, and hurried her into a picture store.

"I 've just *got* to have that picture of the Bargello!" she exclaimed. "They 're marked down to twelve cents to-day, and I 'm afraid it will be taken if I wait. I really can't afford it, but I 've been longing for it for six months, and I just can't stand it any longer!"

"What in the world do you want of that little photograph?" Miss Delafield asked, after the purchase had been rapturously made.

"Oh, you 'd laugh at me!" said the Whimbrel, a new, deeper look in her wide brown eyes. Miss Delafield clasped her hand in a promise of sympathy. "Well, then," said the Whimbrel, as they walked on, "I 'm traveling in northern Italy!"

Miss Delafield looked puzzled.

"It 's my one extravagance, but you need n't scold me. You 're extravagant yourself, you know, Stella. I 've seen your underwear — you can't tell *me!* Those silk stockings you have on cost four dollars, if they cost a cent. And you wear hand-made stocks and cuffs and things — they cost money, even if you *do* make them yourself! I spend all my spare money on photographs and maps, and economize on clothes. All the tips I get, I use in northern Italy. Of course it is n't much, for they don't tip much in the dairy. But I try to be as nice as I can to everybody, whether they tip me or not, because I don't want this to make me mercenary."

"How did you ever get such a crazy notion into your head anyway?" said Miss Delafield, looking at her curiously.

"Why, one day I happened to see a red-covered book lying on top of an ash-barrel, and I took it out and carried it home. It was an old copy of Baedeker's guide-book to northern Italy. I sat up till two o'clock that night, I remember, and every night after that, till I had finished it, all except three pages about Pisa that were torn out. Oh, Stella, it was like a

beautiful dream! It was a dream I have n't really waked up from, even yet! There was an old Italian lived next to us; he taught music, and I got him to tell me all about it, and pronounce the names for me — such wonderful, beautiful names, Stella, just like music — Lago di Como, Lugano, Bellagio, Fiesole, and even the common ones like campanile and piazza. You know the cities don't have the names we know them by at all! Florence is Firenze, and Venice is Venezia. Well, I know the book almost by heart now, and so I travel about from place to place on the maps, through the streets, past all the beautiful, lovely buildings, and over the wonderful marble bridges, and into the churches. I 've bought loads of photographs, but there are so many I can't get! I 've learned lots, but there are so many things I want so much to know about — Byzantine architecture, and Botticelli, and the Renaissance. The old Italian died last summer, so I have to puzzle it all out by myself now. I 'm trying to save up money so I can really go some day. Do you know, the very stones they build houses of in Venice are all colored; think of it! If I could only have one day and one night there

in a gondola, and see the palaces and the funny little passageways and 'poquito' canals, and the Bridge of Sighs, and the Rialto — oh, I 'd work for the next five years without complaining!"

"You 're a queer little girl, are n't you?" said Miss Delafield. "How perfectly absurd you are. Why, you 're almost as funny as the Whaup!"

"Who is the Whaup?" the Whimbrel asked.

"Oh, he 's just a silly boy who works at our place. I never saw such a goose, so I call him the Whaup, the same as I call you the Whimbrel. He 's all the time pretending he 's a prince in disguise or somebody else that he is n't, instead of attending to business. He goes out every night looking for adventures like a schoolboy. Is n't it perfectly foolish of him?"

"No, it 's *fine!*" cried the Whimbrel, her face lighting. "Why, I had no idea men were ever like that! It 's perfectly lovely to think of somebody really doing it. I thought I was the only person in the world who had It."

"Had what?" said Miss Delafield.

"IT," cried the Whimbrel. "He's got *It*, I do believe! What did you say he was — a Whaup?"

"Yes," said Miss Delafield, "he's just the same silly sort of curlew as you, dear!"

"Oh, you don't understand — nobody understands! But you're awfully nice and dear, even if you have n't got It." She paused, to add presently, "I think I'd like that "Whaup!"

. . . . . .

The routine of the Whaup's dreary bookkeeping was broken, one day, by the arrival of an express package addressed to John Gow, Esq. The cashier watched him slyly as he opened it. Within her experience he had never received a letter, or been visited by a friend, or even mentioned an acquaintance excepting his landlady, an aged aunt in Hoboken, and a little niece, for whom he was wont to cut out advertising pictures and paste them into a scrapbook.

His looks now betokened a high and wondering excitement. With eager fingers he opened the pasteboard box; then his face went on fire. After a single rapt glance at the contents of the package, he hastily shoved it into a

closet behind him, and closed the door. Then he went over to the cashier.

"It 's come!" he whispered solemnly.

"What 's come, Whaup?"

"The Adventure!" he hissed. "Did you see that package that just came for me? *It was a Luger magazine pistol and a Colt's 44!*"

"Who in the world ever sent them?" she asked, smiling.

"I don't know. And I don't want to know! It 's a mystery. Don't tell any one about it, will you? It might spoil everything!"

He returned to his desk. But every ten minutes, at least, during the remainder of the day, he stole to the closet, took a furtive, fascinated look at the weapons, and shut them in again. His face, illumined by rapture, then returned patiently to the ledger. At six o'clock, Miss Delafield saw him go to the closet, change his coat, take the smaller pistol from the box, slip it into his pocket, and walk splendidly away without a word.

From that day on, the Whaup's attitude towards the cashier, while still as kind, was the slightest degree more patronizing, as of one who, ennobled by high Romance, condescends

to the humble wayfarer of the Commonplace. He kept an indulgent eye upon her work, and encouraged her to make the most of her rather limited capacity, advising her to study stenography. He assumed, in short, the genial pose of Mentor. So much had the distinction of Fate done for him. He came back to his desk, one noon, to say, when Miss Delafield came in, —

"Say, who was that pretty little girl I saw you with yesterday on Broadway?"

"Oh, that was the Whimbrel — is n't she nice?"

He showed a whimsical interest. "What, the whimbrel, or little whaup, may-whaup, tang-whaup, or curlew? The *Neumenias Phæopus?* She must be a relative of mine!" The familiar words came freely. "What is she like?"

"Oh, she 's a perfect little fool. If you call *me* extravagant, I wonder what you 'd think of *her!* Now would n't you think that a girl who works for six dollars a week would have more sense than to spend it on photographs of old buildings and stupid cathedrals, and waste her time dreaming about Italy, instead of trying

to educate herself for a better position? She pretends she 's traveling all the time, and sits up in her room, mooning away over maps and pictures, till I should think she 'd grow crazy."

"You don't say so!" said the Whaup, with his queer, intent stare at the Indian calendar. "She *is* a whimbrel, is n't she! Say, I 'd rather like to know her, I think!"

"Oh, you 're crazy enough already!" said the cashier.

"I never knew anybody who did things like that," he went on dreamily. "Somehow, I think perhaps she 'd understand. You see, *you* never try to get out of the every-day rut, and you don't know what it means to play the game."

"What game?" asked the cashier.

"THE Game!" he exclaimed, smiling at her in a superior way. "You 're awfully nice, Miss Delafield, but you have no sense of romance, and so you can't play it. But I 'd like to know that Whimbrel!"

He came back to the subject of the Whimbrel cautiously, several times, that afternoon, and the cashier answered each of his questions

with a smile. The next noon, noticing that she had brought her lunch, he left his unopened, slipped mysteriously out of the office, and made his way to the dairy alone. There was a new, bold light in his eye, and the spirit of adventure showed in his carriage as he entered the shop, sat down at a table, and looked curiously about him.

A black-frocked, round-faced, pink-and-white girl with neatly parted brown satiny hair came up to take his order. The Whaup's gentle voice was a bit unsteady as he called for a glass of milk and a piece of pumpkin pie. He dared not look at the little waitress. As soon as she had turned away, however, he mustered up his courage, took out a soft lead pencil, and wrote the word "whimbrel" in large plain letters upon the tablecloth.

She returned with his order, and was about to set it down upon the table, when she caught sight of the writing. The Whaup, staring boldly at her now, saw her blush desperately, and her hand shake so that the milk slopped from the tall tumbler into the saucer. Her lips were parted, her breath came and went, but she neither spoke nor smiled.

"I am the Whaup," he said. "Are you the Whimbrel?"

She nodded; then giving him one quick, frightened glance, she hurried away.

He had followed only his boyish dreams before that, but now he became a man, and he pursued a man's quarry. The blood ran warm in his veins, his eyes burned with soft fires, his head was held high. He became of a new, sudden importance to himself, he felt a new dignity, a new power. He walked home that day more a prince in disguise than ever. And there was spring in the land, abounding, jubilant, intoxicating, like Heaven spilling over upon the earth to drench it with rapture.

The Whaup came again and again to the little shop, and by degrees dared conversation with her. The Whimbrel, as timid as he, before, accepted, with a fluttering heart, the tribute of his smile and the reverence of his blue eyes. He began to wait for her, to walk uptown with her through the June sunshine. For a long time they talked but little, but soon they discovered such a rare similarity in their points of view, that the more common obvious remarks and comments were unnecessary, and they con-

versed in queer elliptical phrases that a hearer would find hard to understand. It was a secret language instinctively felt and comprehended by such fey spirits as they. Often their conversation would be like this: —

"Yes, you certainly have got It, Whaup!"

"And you know how to play the Game, Whimbrel."

"Is n't Stella a dear?"

"Yes — but if she only understood!"

"She never will know, will she?"

"Never! Poor Stella!"

There is no such thing as "making" love for such rare comrades. Love comes itself like an opening flower, as naturally as the mating of birds. Confirmed by tiny coincidences of taste and feeling and sensibility, it illumined life so marvelously that it needed no announcement, no proof, no test of time or absence. In a flash of insight they recognized divinity, and the rest was so plain, so simple to their eyes, that it needed no tribute even of wonder — it was inevitable. Their fresh, ardent spirits ran singing to meet each other.

. . . . . .

The cashier kept sedulously apart, now, from

the Whaup and the Whimbrel, avoiding the streets where they might walk. If she missed them, she did not show it. No one, looking at her, would have suspected her of being unhappy. There was the same keen interest in life — in everything that made her environment. She was always watching amusedly the little commonplace dramas of the store — bickering customers, harassed clerks, and jovial teamsters. Often her quick smile came and went, narrowing her eyes for an instant; as often her eyes would soften and burn with hazel fires, in sympathy or kindness. Sometimes she ate her lunch alone, sitting upon the Whaup's favorite coil of rope in the Annex; sometimes she talked with the shipping-clerk about his wife and children; sometimes she sought new restaurants, or disappeared, to come back in haste from no one knew where. Occasionally a young man with a small black mustache came in to see her for fifteen minutes' conversation — always at the noon hour, while the Whaup was away.

One day, as she was slowly walking uptown, watching the passers-by with her habitual curiosity, she came unexpectedly upon the Whaup and the Whimbrel. They were studying the

façade of one of the newer office buildings, and the Whimbrel was pointing out some detail in the rustication of the wall which reminded her of a Florentine palace. The Whaup's long neck was craned and his mouth was open, as he followed her words. He had one hand laid protectingly upon the Whimbrel's arm, the other caressed a moulding of carved sandstone. The Whimbrel caught sight of Miss Delafield, who was trying to pass unnoticed.

"Why, it 's Stella!" she exclaimed. "Oh, do come and walk uptown with us, dear!"

The Whaup's face burst into a wonderful smile. "Let 's tell her, Whimbrel." The Whimbrel nodded enthusiastically, and blushed violently.

"We 're engaged, Miss Delafield," he announced.

"Why, are you really? I 'm *so* surprised. But I 'm so glad, too! Is n't it lovely! Why, is n't it romantic! How did you ever meet each other? I always intended to introduce you, but" —

"That 's the beautiful part of it!" said the Whimbrel joyously. "We were n't introduced at all! Ordinary people are always introduced,

but we just found each other all by ourselves, did n't we, Whaup? Think of it! In all this great, big city, we found each other! It was It that brought us together, I 'm sure! You poor dear, you 'll never know how wonderful It is! I wish I could make you understand. It began to come the very first day we were engaged. I got the most beautiful present you ever saw — Botticelli's "Annunciation" — not a little one, but a big Braun print. It 's the most beautiful picture in the world! And a book about Florence, too! We 're reading it together, with a map!"

"Why, who sent it?" exclaimed Miss Delafield. "The Whaup, naturally!"

"No, he did n't! At first I thought of course he did, but now I 'm so glad he did n't. I don't want to know who sent it. It 's just a part of It. It 's a blessed mystery! Now we 're going to do something wonderful! Shall we tell Stella about it, Whaup?"

"Yes, she can be umpire," said the Whaup.

"We won't tell her till we get up there, though," said the Whimbrel, and putting an arm in Miss Delafield's, and one in the Whaup's, she started them up Broadway.

They walked, chattering blissfully, in simple, obvious dialogue so that the unillumined cashier might understand, till the three reached Madison Square. There the Whimbrel steered them up to the Farragut Monument, and they sat down in a row upon its curved seat.

"Now!" she said, drawing a long breath, "this is what we're going to do. The Whaup has saved up two hundred dollars, and I have a hundred and sixty dollars and seventy cents in the savings bank. We're going to put it together and make a — what do you call it, Whaup?"

"A pool," said the Whaup.

"We're going to make a pool. Then we're going to draw lots, and the one that wins is going to go on a glorious vacation. If the Whaup wins, he's going to take his revolvers and go out West to Leadville and the Black Hills and the Yellowstone Park. If I win, I'm going to take a steerage ticket on a Mediterranean steamer to Naples, and go straight to Tuscany, and stay till I've spent every last solitary cent."

"Of course it's foolish and reckless and extravagant, and it takes my breath away," said

Miss Delafield, "but I suppose there's no use arguing with you — you're both crazy. Shall I hold the lots?"

She tore two strips from a newspaper, a long and a short one, and folded them up to the same size. Then she went behind the seat, and arranged them in her hand. When she came back, she held them out, saying, "The short one wins."

The Whimbrel drew one forth gingerly, the Whaup took the other. The Whimbrel's was the shorter.

She put her face in her hands and sat for a moment without speaking, while the cashier watched her, and the Whaup's face grew radiant with happiness. When the Whimbrel raised her head, there were tears in her eyes.

"Oh, I was so sure you were going to get it, Whaup!" she cried. "I *can't* take it myself — I don't *want* it? I would n't enjoy it one *bit!* It would be so selfish! I wanted you to go!"

"Nonsense!" the Whaup exclaimed. "Of course you'll go. You've simply *got* to go. You can write to me every day, and I'll enjoy it just as much as you do — I'll enjoy it more than if I went myself, really!"

"I can't do it!" the Whimbrel moaned.

"You promised," said the Whaup sternly.

"I don't care, I never intended to go! Let 's try it again!"

"Pshaw! Do you think I'd go? I would n't go off alone for the world!"

The Whimbrel stared at him sharply. "Do you mean to say, Whaup, that you were intending to cheat?"

"Of course I was!" he affirmed unblushingly. "I was going to fix those papers so that you would win. I guess we 'll have to give the whole scheme up now."

"And get married!" the cashier exclaimed, beaming at them.

"Oh!" said the Whimbrel ingenuously, "that would be nicer than going anywhere in the world!"

The Whaup's eyes flashed. "Oh, *will* you?"

"You can spend the pool on furniture; that will be a very sensible thing to do," Miss Delafield added.

"Yes, that 's the unfortunate part of it," said the Whaup.

The little cashier looked mystified.

The Whimbrel laughed. "Don't mind him,

Stella, dear, that 's only a part of our shorthand talk. Of course *you* can't understand it. But you 'll come with us and help us select the furniture, won't you, dear? You 're so very practical minded, it will be a great help."

Stella laughed. "Yes, I 'm hopelessly commonplace, I know, but it 's a good thing that you blessed infants have some one with common sense to take care of you."

They set about the matter immediately. Miss Delafield soon discovered for them the most amusing of little flats in Harlem, absurdly cheap. The next week was spent in furnishing it. Here the cashier's help was mysteriously potent. While the Whaup and the Whimbrel spun their fanciful romances together, she drew the salesmen aside to whisper of materials and construction and prices — with the result of obtaining the most extraordinary bargains. Everything was lovely and perfect in the Whimbrel's eyes, and charmingly appropriate in the Whaup's. But they had to have their Game, with it all, and played like children with the purchases.

"There goes my trip to Lake Como," said the Whimbrel mournfully, as the bedroom set

was bought. Miss Delafield had said it was stained birch, but it looked suspiciously like real mahogany.

"That's just about the price of a Mexican saddle and bridle," said the Whaup, when the dining-table was paid for.

"Of course you know it's only machine-carved," said Miss Delafield, and the salesman turned his back to grin.

There was also a Persian rug, worth a week on the Grand Canal, and a shaving-stand, for which the Whaup sacrificed a journey to the Grand Cañon of the Colorado. The leaning tower of Pisa was represented by a cheval-glass, Pike's Peak by a copper lamp. So they sped through those vast halls of furniture, from Lombardy to the Devil's Gulch, as on a magic carpet, leaving the poor, matter-of-fact little cashier to trot along smilingly behind.

. . . . . .

It was a ridiculous honeymoon. Three days at Coney Island might seem tawdry enough to any one except the Whaup and the Whimbrel, even though it were spent with an elephant trainer's wife. But to this childlike bridal pair the little holiday abounded in the miracles

of the commonplace. They wondered — all day long.

Before they returned, to begin the proud proprietorship of a home, to the Whaup came the Whimbrel, and inserted an affectionate forefinger into the buttonhole of his coat.

"Dear old Whaup," she said, "don't you think it would be nice to have Stella out to dinner with us the first time we eat in the flat? She 's such a poor, lonely little thing; she does n't know hardly anybody or have anywhere to go, she 's so poor, and she has n't even got It to comfort her!"

"All right," the Whaup agreed; "I 'll telegraph to her to come out to-morrow."

"Be sure you don't by any accident make the message exactly ten words long," said the Whimbrel. "She 's such a conventional, unimaginative child that it 's always fun to shock her. And eleven words in a telegram does seem *terribly* extravagant, and it only costs three cents more."

At the little flat in Harlem a surprise awaited the Whaup and the Whimbrel — a surprise so magically magnificent, so overpoweringly wonderful, that they looked at each other almost

with fear and spoke in whispers. Upon a bureau (in the Lake of Como) was an envelope addressed to Mr. and Mrs. John Gow.

Inside were ten one hundred dollar bills.

"What shall we do? What does it mean! Who sent it?" cried the Whimbrel.

The Whaup smiled and slapped the money loftily in fine equanimity, rising superbly to the situation. "What shall we do? We 'll prove that we 're worthy of it by taking it and spending it, without embarrassment or question! Listen here, dear, is n't this just exactly what *we 'd* do, if *we* were rich? There 's nothing really surprising about it, is there? Some one who knows us understands; that 's all! Some one is playing the Game as we would play it if we could!"

"Yes, somebody 's got It!" said the Whimbrel, "but I wonder who it can be!"

The dinner was all ready when the cashier came, and after they had gone to "Arizona," as the Whaup called their tiny dining-room, it was the Whimbrel's conceit to wait upon the two together, as she had so often waited upon them separately, in the downtown dairy. For a while the Whaup suffered her to play out the game;

then, asserting his new authority, he charged into the toy kitchen and brought his wife back by force. As they sat over their coffee, he disclosed their wonderful good fortune to Miss Delafield.

"Is n't it lovely! How are you going to spend it?" she asked. Then she turned to the wife. "I suppose you 'll take the first boat to Italy, won't you?"

"Oh, no!" said the Whimbrel.

"You 're going West first, then," said the cashier, turning to the husband.

"Oh, no!" said the Whaup.

"The fact is," the Whimbrel sighed, "we don't want to travel, after all — not for a while at least. We 're really tired of travel, and we 've found something so much better right here — better than Italy, better than Colorado, is n't it, dear?"

"You *bet* it is!" cried the Whaup.

They had looked deep into each other's eyes, as they spoke, and when at last their glance was freed from that loving exchange, they saw that Miss Delafield's mouth was trembling.

The Whimbrel sprang up and put her arm about the cashier's neck, kissing her on the cheek.

"Oh, you poor, dear thing!" she whispered. "Is n't it selfish of us to be so happy! I wish we could make you as happy as we are!"

Miss Delafield's smile came back suddenly, with a flash that relieved the Whaup's perturbation. She returned the Whimbrel's kiss, but did not let go the hand that nestled in her own.

"I 'm so glad you 're happy," she said. "I was sorry only because I was afraid I might n't see you any more. I 've given up my position at Deacon Brothers, and I am thinking of leaving town."

The Whimbrel looked at her for a moment in silence, then, releasing herself, ran out of the room. She returned to press a folded bank note into Miss Delafield's hand.

"You *must* take this, and use it for your vacation. We *both* want you to, don't we, Whaup? It would make us unhappy if you did n't — would n't it, Whaup? You need a good long rest."

Miss Delafield kept the bill and smiled. She tried to speak, but it seemed impossible.

Then the Whaup cleared his throat; his Adam's apple rose and fell. "There 's something I wanted to tell you, Miss Delafield," he

began solemnly. "Do let me say it now. I 'm sure you 'd be much happier if you did n't take things quite so seriously. You ought to try to get your mind out of your matter-of-fact daily, commonplace routine, sometimes. Life is n't half so stupid as it looks; if you only look for romance, you 'll find it! Just because you have to earn your living in a humdrum business, surrounded by common people and dollars and hardware, you need n't make life all prose; if you used your imagination even, all that might be interesting. If you could only play with your world as we play with ours, and sometimes get outside of it, you 'd find it loads of fun!"

Miss Delafield shook her head plaintively. "You know I have no imagination. But I 'll try!"

"I wish I could teach you to play the Game," said the Whimbrel, "but I guess you have to be born with it."

Miss Delafield bade them a cheerful good-night, insisting that the Whaup should not see her even to her car. Then, after their visitor had gone, the little Whimbrel climbed into her husband's lap and put her two red lips to his ear.

"Do you know why I 'm so fond of Stella, dear? Do you know why I wanted her here to-night?" she whispered.

The Whaup shook his head as well as he could, in the circumstances, for there were two arms about his neck.

"It 's because I think she 's in love with you, you dear old Whaup! I was so sorry for her — not the least bit jealous, of course, for she has n't got It, has she? Not the least little bit!"

"No, I 'm sorry for her too — if she could only play the Game!"

He walked to the window and looked out.

"Look at that carriage driving away!" he exclaimed suddenly. "It must have been waiting at one of these houses. I wonder if it 's a brougham! I was never quite sure what a brougham was." Then his voice grew melodramatic.

"In that brougham, dear, — I 'm sure it 's a brougham, — perhaps there is a wonderfully rich young girl, beautiful, and full of spirit, going out on some thrilling adventure!"

"Perhaps she 's coming back from one," suggested the Whimbrel.

IV

The Murder of M. Elphinstone

MISS MILLION was always fond of East Twenty-Third Street, the busy, agitated link between the East and West Sides. She picked out No. 111, an old-fashioned three-story house, back from the street, long before she knew precisely how, in her scheme of adventure, to make use of it.

A sight, one day, of the maiden lady, Miss Henrietta Hooper, seated, embroidering, at the upper window, had fixed Miss Million's attention, and seeing the same queer original figure always on the lookout, during subsequent weeks, Miss Million decided to make, in some way, her acquaintance. It did not take long to arrive at a plan.

She took several lessons from a manicure, and — this story tells the rest.

Miss Million still, of course, occupied her apartments in East Fifty-Eighth Street, and I was kept busy enough, you may imagine, shopping for her, for Miss Hooper's benefit.

A Little Sister of Destiny

I myself, diverted by my patroness's stories, made the acquaintance of Captain Bildad, and did not a little, behind the scenes, to encourage him in his love affair. It was my rare pleasure to stuff his pocket, that day, at Miss Million's request, and subsequently to stand in the Little Church Around the Corner, as best man, with this eccentric pair.

The Murder of M. Elphinstone

BUSINESS was not very brisk at Miss Mary Mott's Manicure Parlors, at No. 111 East Twenty-Third Street. It had not as yet been worth Miss Mott's while to engage the services of an assistant. Her parlors were fitted up with a quiet, tasteful elegance uncommon in such places. Her instruments were of ivory and gold, her perfumes, polishes, and powders were all imported. Her chairs, tables, and screens were of an expensive simplicity.

Miss Mott herself, ladylike, smartly dressed, petite, gracile, and graceful, had personality, and something of that distinction and attractiveness that full-length portraits show. Her small head was poised aristocratically upon a slender, well-formed neck. Her hands were small, delicate, and clever, strongly expressive in their light, fairy-like gestures. Her quick smile registered all shades of mirth, from glee to that quiet humor which lies nearest pathos. She was only

twenty-three, full of a fine, urgent joy of youth, spirited, proud, sympathetic in every tone of her musical voice.

As she stood, one morning, at the long front windows of her parlors on the first floor, she heard behind her some one coughing with an old-fashioned affectation. She turned to see a woman, who, but for the girlish elasticity of her carriage and the freshness of her complexion, would be called a typical "old maid." She was, at all events, indubitably a spinster of forty-odd years, with twinkling eyes, and a heavy mass of grayish hair, held in place by a complicated system of interweavings, rather than by hairpins. She had a general air of eccentricity that was specialized, perhaps, only in her basque, which was fastened down the front with a close row of small metal buttons. At the appearance of this visitor, Miss Mott smiled a frank welcome.

"I calculated it was about time to drop in and see you, Miss Mott, bein' as we 're neighbors under the same roof. Henrietta Hooper 's my name," said the caller.

"Oh, I 'm so glad to see you!" said Miss Mott. "You 're the lady who does the wonder-

ful linen embroidery, on the top floor, are n't you?"

"Well, I must say I prefer to be known by other things than that!" said Henrietta Hooper spicily. "I 'm a human bein', same as the rest, I expect, and I always expect to be treated as such. But I ain't got no call to complain; I make a livin', and if you 've got to work, you 've got to be branded by it, I s'pose. But land! how slick you 've got it fixed up here! Them tablecloths of yourn must have cost you a sight of money! Business good? I expect you have your streaks of fat and lean like the rest of us. I never was in a man-i-cure place before — looks some like a barber shop, don't it? What 's all them little jiggers for, anyway?"

"Do let me show you, Miss Hooper. I 'd love to explain it all, and you have such beautiful hands, it will give me a great deal of pleasure to do your nails."

"I don't know but what I will," said Miss Hooper. "It won't do me no harm to rest a little while, and it 'll give us a chance to have a dish of conversation. I go as crazy as a cat when I can't talk. I do hope you 're goin' to be

real neighborly. There ain't been a woman in this house since the two Cubans left, and that artist on the second floor is so pernickerty I hate to speak to him."

Miss Mott sat down at the table in front of her guest, and began to soak and scrape and pare and snip and file and wipe and rub and polish, asking a question, now and then, to draw Miss Hooper out. It was not difficult. The spinster watched the process, losing no detail, making many humorous comments upon the work.

"It seems kind of dark and dull down here," she said. "Now I do admire a top floor, where you can see what 's goin' on. I spend most of my time at the window, and I 've got to know everybody on the block, and I 've given 'em my own names. I don't s'pose I know more 'n six people in New York to speak to, but I like to pretend I recognize every one that comes by. The forewoman at the shop where I sell my embroideries thinks I 'm cracked because I like to dress up in my best whether I see anybody or not. You ought to see a nightgown I made — it 's lovely! I only wear it once a month and on Sundays and holidays, but it 's a great

comfort to have something nice, even if it ain't seen, don't you think so? They might be a fire or something — but, Lord! I suppose I 'd have on an old one, if it *did* come! I do admire linen sheets, too, and I 'm savin' up to get me a pair. It 's the little things that count in a woman's life; I can do without the big ones well enough. I never had a piece of real lace in my life, but some time I 'm goin' to buy a handkerchief that *is* a handkerchief. Perhaps I may accidentally drop it somewheres, and who knows but it 'll be noticed? Lord, if you knew how I hated cotton! It seems a sin to spend money for things that are too good to use, but it 's a heap of satisfaction to know that *something 's* right, even if it 's only seen by the washwoman!"

"I s'pose you must have wondered some at seein' me get so many letters reg'lar," she said at last, tentatively.

"Why, yes," Miss Mott replied, adding pink to Henrietta's nails, "I 've noticed them every morning on the hall stand."

"I do get considerable mail," said Henrietta, with a self-satisfied smile. "They pester me sometimes, but it 's company for me,

too, I'm alone so much; I don't see many folks."

"They seem to be mostly addressed in a man's handwriting," Miss Mott ventured, seeing that her friend was waxing confidential.

"My dear," cried Henrietta, with a burst of apparently long pent-up feeling, "the way that man is persecutin' me would make your hair stand on end! If you only *knew!* It's been goin' on for some time now, and I can't persuade him to let me alone, no way in the world! Where it'll end, I don't know, nor can I imagine!"

"You poor thing!" said Miss Mott. "I'd never think you had an enemy in the world!"

Henrietta Hooper dropped her voice to a whisper. "Enemy? Why, he's dead in *love* with me, Miss Mott, believe it or not, as you see fit. He's simply *crazy* about me — did you *ever?* He's so violent, sometimes, I've been afraid I'd have to have him arrested and locked up. But somehow I can't help pityin' him, and you know it does flatter a woman to have a man take on about her. If you could just hear one of his letters, you'd throw a fit!"

"Oh, do let me see one!" Miss Mott begged

shamelessly, taking the cue. "I 've always wanted to hear a really good love-letter — men are usually so silly about it."

"I don't know as I ought to," Henrietta said, pursing her red lips, "but seein' as I 've never laid eyes on the man, I don't know why I 'm bound to keep his confidence."

"You 've never seen him? Why, how does he know you, then?" Miss Mott exclaimed.

Henrietta replied coyly. "Why, it seems he 's seen me workin' in my window. You know I sit there mostly, and he was smitten, so he says; though you can't never believe a man's word. Anyway, he found out my name somehow. I 'm scared to death for fear he 'll come blunderin' in, some day, and want to see me, and insist on my marryin' him on the spot. Imagine! I 'll just read you a little, to show you what a born fool the critter is."

She drew a sheet of folded commercial notepaper from her basque and began to read aloud:

"'My heart is a hurricane of thwarted passion and wild yearning, and unless you consent to be mine, all hell cannot keep me from you.' . . . H'm! Well, I 'll skip this, it 's all about my eyes, 'orbs,' he calls 'em — a lot *he* knows;

then there 's a mess of poppy-cock about 'fairy fingers, fanciful and fine.' . . . Oh, yes, here it is . . . 'Woman, wildly as I adore you, worship you, I cannot longer wait, weary and wretched in my woe! Rather shall I stab you to the heart and turn the same knife upon myself, than see your charms reveled in by another.' . . . What d' you think of *that!* Ain't it *awful?*"

"My! It *is* exciting," said the manicure. "Nobody ever loved *me* like that!"

"Oh, they may, by the time you get to be my age," said Henrietta complacently. "But it 's terrible to be loved like that, though! I don't know what I 'm a-goin' to do. Mortimer Elphinstone, his name is — genteel, ain't it? Imagine me as Mrs. Elphinstone! I guess not much!"

She arose, and examined her finger-nails with pride. "They do look elegant, don't they? I had no idea they could be made to look so pretty. But you must let me pay you!"

"Oh, you 've more than paid me already," said Miss Mott. "If you 'll only drop in often and tell me how your love affair is going on, I 'll call it square."

"I will. I 'm so glad to have some one to talk to about it, but I hope you won't think I 'm silly," said Henrietta Hooper, as she went upstairs.

Miss Mott sat down to her desk telephone and rang up for a sprightly, excited conversation with some one whom she addressed as Mr. Rayne.

. . . . . .

Henrietta Hooper came bustling into the manicure parlors the next morning, in high feather. "What d' you think!" she announced. "If this don't beat the Dutch! Just you look at what came for me this morning, from Heaven knows who!"

She opened a pretty pasteboard box and exhibited her gift. It was a delicate blue Liberty silk *peignoir*, embroidered in odd, elaborate patterns, of a spider-web fineness, and exquisitely fagoted along the seams.

"I 'll bet that cost forty dollars, if it cost a cent! I 'd like to know who was fool enough to send it to an old maid like me. Why, it 's fit for a wedding outfit! But it 'll be lovely to put on when I sit in the window!"

"Why, it 's from Mr. Elphinstone, is n't it?" Miss Mott asked.

"Mortimer Elphinstone? Not he! He's as poor as Job's cat. Why, he wrote me only t' other day that he was 'rich only in the royal wealth of his lurid love of you, but therein a rival of dukes and emperors.' Or, leastways, that 's as near as I can recall his nonsense. No, siree, Bob! It 's from somebody that has sense enough to know that actions speak louder than words. There 's *two* of 'em after me now — ain't it ridiculous?"

The next morning she appeared, wildly excited, with another tribute from her mysterious admirer, this time a pair of white velvet, fur-trimmed bedroom slippers. On the third day a little trunk filled with cut-glass bottles of French perfumes appeared, and Henrietta Hooper's wonder grew.

Every day after that a new present appeared, and the collection now began to transform her dingy bedroom into the aspect of something like the boudoir of a *mondaine*, without any clue appearing to solve the secret of its origin. A dozen silk stockings of various soft colors was followed by silk scarves, bathrobes, and soft Turkish towels. Then came cases of expensive stationery, embossed with a quaint monogram,

a fleecy feather boa, a bunch of beautiful shaded green ostrich plumes, white kid gloves by the dozen, Duchesse lace handkerchiefs by the box, huge bunches of violets, tins of chocolates and *marrons glacés*, veils, orchids, and lingerie — a succession of wonderful, extravagant luxuries heretofore unthought of by the modest, hard-working spinster, but each gift a delight to her imaginative, romantic soul.

For a while her surprise exhausted her. She lost herself in a thousand speculations, inventing theories that included as hero every man she had ever seen or heard of. She found no explanation of her good fortune too wild to consider seriously with the manicure, as she came, day after day, to exhibit her marvelous gifts. Finally, she gave up the problem, as one gives up the miracles of a prestidigitateur. Her gifts appeared out of Nowhere, as if drawn, by weird conjury, from some invisible magic hat.

. . . . . .

While this was going on, Miss Mott had another visitor. He was a big, burly, bearded stranger, dressed in a blue double-breasted reefer, loud of speech and laughter, awkward and jovial. He stuck his head in the door-

way one afternoon and looked smilingly into the room. Then, pulling off his derby hat, he entered, as if wading through water up to his knees.

"How de do?" he said sheepishly.

Miss Mott returned his greeting with a gay "Good afternoon," and awaited his next remark.

"I just come in to see what this joint was like," he explained, twirling his hat in his hands. "I thought maybe I 'd try a shot myself, if it did n't cost too much."

"Would you like to be manicured?" she asked, getting a table ready and turning on an electric light over it.

"Say, what 's the little game anyway? Does it hurt?" he inquired, looking at the knives and scissors suspiciously.

Miss Mott smiled, and it seemed to reassure him.

"The fact is," he went on, eyeing her preparations, "I see your sign in the window, and it was a new one on me, so I asked a cop what was a manicure, and he tips me a wink and says, 'It 's a place where a pretty girl holds your hands while you jolly her.' 'That 's about my size,'

says I, so in I come! But I guess I made a mistake, probably, and I beg your pardon, miss. Don't take it ill of me — but I expect I 'd better steam out."

"Oh, no, you 'd better stay, now you 've come," said Miss Mott pleasantly. "Let me see your fingers."

He held to her, without embarrassment, a pair of hands whose stumpy fingers were stained with tar, pitch, and dirt, and seared with scars. His nails were indescribable. Miss Mott laughed.

"I 'll do what I can with them," she said, "but you 'll have to come in several times, I 'm afraid, before I can make them look very well."

He laughed so jocundly as to shake the chandelier while she placed the ends of his fingers in the bowl of lemon water. Then he leaned his elbows on the table and proceeded to enjoy the situation.

"I s'pose these here dudes come in here to be scraped up and holystoned quite often, don't they?" he remarked. "I don't know as I mind being overhauled myself, once in a while, now I 'm onto the game. But I never

washed my hands in lemonade before. Beats soft-soap all to pieces, don't it!"

"So you 're a sailor?" said the manicure.

"Tug 'Emmy Lou,' laid up for repairs, at present," he answered. "Say, if you ever want to take a trip down the harbor, come down to Pier 467 and ask for Cap'm Bildad Cushman, and I 'll show you blue water. Let you take a trick at the wheel, too."

The manicure's task was well-nigh hopeless, but at length she had finished her beginning— "polishing the brasswork," he called it. As she came to an end, he remarked in an embarrassed tone: —

"I say, miss, does there happen to be a lady living here by the name of Hooper? I 've been rooming over to the starboard side of the street, abaft here, and I 've seen somebody going in and coming out occasionally that looks powerfully like a girl I used to know in New Bedford, when I was a boy."

"Why, yes, Miss Henrietta Hooper — she 's a great friend of mine," said the manicure.

"Well, don't that beat all!" he exclaimed. "I used to know Henny Hooper when she was the worst out-and-out tomboy on Buz-

zard's Bay! She was a queer one, all the time up to some monkey-trick or other. Full of the devil. I expect she's sobered down, though, by this time. I see she has gray hair. I'd like to hail her!"

"Why don't you go up and call on her?" asked Miss Mott. "She lives on the top floor, front, and I'm sure she'll be glad to see an old friend. Do go up and speak to her, and then come back and tell me all about it, won't you?"

"I will, by Jupiter!" he vociferated, and laughed a hearty laugh. Within five minutes he was stumbling up the stairway.

Now, Miss Henrietta Hooper lived in a front alcoved room on the third floor; and as the other lodgers were away from home all day, she usually left her door wide open. The captain, therefore, upon arriving at the upper landing, had a view of the spinster and her apartment before she was aware of his visit. He stood for several moments, transfixed with admiration, before announcing his presence.

She was seated by the window, dressed in a long, delicately, softly clinging blue silk *peignoir*, elegantly trimmed with lace. She had a red

rose stuck coquettishly in her hair, the sister to those filling a bowl upon the table. About her shoulders was thrown a Liberty silk scarf, dotted with Dresden roses. Her careless pose permitted a discreet vision of green silk stockings and a pair of dainty, fur-trimmed white velvet slippers. The picture was completed by an Angora cat, the latest of Miss Hooper's gifts, which leaped in gay abandon upon the floor.

So much, Miss Mott, tiptoeing after Captain Bildad, saw from behind his back. Then she discreetly retired, to await his report in her parlors below.

He came back, roaring jubilantly, "I done it, and she 's the self-same one I used to hook Jack with from the brick schoolhouse! Say, she 's high and mighty now, though, ain't she! She 's full-rigged and ship-shape, *she* is! Gosh! I was almost afraid to brace her, with her silks and satins and her doo-dads and what-you-call-'em's, all over cologne and truck. But I got over that! We got on fine!" He stopped to bellow.

"Say, miss, she 's got a fellow — did you know that? Sure! She told me all about it, and showed me some letters that read like a

page out of a dime novel! Think of Henny Hooper being made love to by a crazy man like that! And she likes it — I 'll be keel-hauled if she don't! But pshaw! I got a game worth ten of that big talk. There 's others that are after Hen Hooper and can make good all right, you bet! I reckon she won't throw down a man what 's been sending her a new present every day for a fortnight!"

"Oh, *you 're* the one, then!" cried Miss Mott, almost exploding with laughter. "I 'm glad to know where they 've been coming from."

"I 'm the mysterious stranger," he thundered, and burst his sides with the convulsions of his mirth. "I 'm going for to give that Mortimer Elphingstone a run for *his* money; you wait! If I can't put up a game to beat a lubber like that, I 'm a dub at the game which is a sailor's pride and joy. Any man that can handle a wheel can handle a woman, my dad used to say."

"So you 're really in love with Henrietta?" Miss Mott asked.

"If she 's good enough for Mortimer Elphingstone, she 's good enough for me, miss! When I first sighted her, I says to myself, says

I, 'It's time to heave your anchor, cap'n; your time has came!' And have her I will. She'd make a first-rate mate. Yes, I'm *for* her! And she's answered my signals already."

"I'm with you!" said the manicure. "I never did like that Mr. Elphinstone, and I'll help you all I can."

"Say, will you stand by me, sure?" he asked, grinning. "If you pass me a cable, you can tow me into an anchorage easy! She'll be Mrs. Cap'm Bildad Cushman before she's a year older, or I'll go back to whaling again. Well, farewell. I'm a-going to clap on all sail and run her down!"

He called daily after that, and usually, coming down from upstairs, dropped in upon his new friend and ally, the manicure, to report progress. Miss Hooper, it appeared from his accounts, was uncertain, coy, and hard to please. She held Mortimer Elphinstone over the captain's head, and persisted in reading her perfervid lover's missives to the scornful seaman. The captain fumed, and pleaded his suit with gentle persistence, but made slow progress. Her appreciation of the presents, however, was cordial.

Miss Hooper, coming down occasionally to be manicured and to gossip, gave her version of the affair as follows: —

"He ain't at all what I 'd call an ardent wooer, Miss Mott; he 's a little bit too meek and mild, sometimes, and he *will* call me 'Miss Henny'! He 's a gentle soul, and I like him, but I do believe he 's afraid of me. Now Mortimer Elphinstone, he 's the sassy kind; he 's as bold as the bulls of Bashan! My, he 'd think no more of knocking me down, I s'pose, if he once got his dander up, than he would of giving me a kiss! I must say there 's a sort of fascination about a masterful man, somehow, though I can't bear real brutality. The cap'm does make love beautiful, but somehow they ain't no ginger to it. I suppose I am a fool, but I do love to see a man get mad, once in a while. Mr. Elphinstone 's gettin' terrible jealous, Miss Mott, and I 'm mortal afraid there 'll be some trouble if he ever encounters Cap'm Bildad."

"Say, you must be doin' well, Miss Mott," she added. "I see you comin' and goin' in a carriage several times lately."

"Oh, I go out to my customers — they send

down their carriages, that's all," Miss Mott explained.

"I don't see many customers comin' in here," Miss Hooper continued. "It beats me to see how you make a livin' doin' finger-nails."

"I have a lot of fun out of it, anyway," said the manicure.

. . . . . .

The captain's course of true love that day ran upon an uncharted reef. He appeared in great distress to ask Miss Mott's advice.

"What d' you think?" he demanded. "Henny's all down in the mouth and flying signals of distress because she ain't received a present for three days! Ain't that ungrateful of her? She's got so used to 'em, she's spoiled. I s'pose I'll have to humor her. What's a good thing to get for a lady, anyway?"

"Well, I believe Henrietta's toilet articles are n't very swell. Why don't you get a nice, pretty brush and comb?" Miss Mott suggested.

"That's fine. I'll do it!" said the captain, and departed on the quest.

Henrietta Hooper showed Miss Mott the result next morning. She entered the manicure

parlor with an expression halfway between scorn and mirth, laying an object upon the table without comment.

It was a box, the exterior of which, so far as velvet, satin, and stamped aluminum could make it, was like a heavy tome. Across its back was printed in gold script the title, "History of Rome." Opening the tiny, ineffectual clasp, Miss Mott beheld, lying in state, as if in a pink silk-padded casket, a yellow brush and a yellow celluloid comb. They were elaborately mottled to resemble onyx, or maybe chalcedony — something, at least, which they obviously were not and could not be, nor should be, if they could. Across the broad blue ribbon which bound them in was painted, in floriated letters, the words "For Remembrance."

"How *could* he! How *could* he!" Henrietta moaned.

Miss Mott stared, overcome with a mirth too great for expression. "Oh, captain, my captain!" she repeated, when she was able to speak.

"What can I do?" said Henrietta. "I can't say I *like* it, can I? And I can't say what I *do* think about it! I don't see how he should have

got this thing, after all the lovely presents he has given me — just exactly the things I wanted — the things a woman would buy! They were all so lovely! But this contraption would scare Old Nick himself!"

"I 'm sure Mortimer Elphinstone would have had better taste," said Miss Mott.

"Indeed he would! He 's always been so refined and elegant, whatever threats he has made — I 'll say *that* for him!"

"It may be a mistake. You 'd better wait till you 're sure," was Miss Mott's advice.

But it was no mistake. The unhappy captain went from the frying-pan into the fire. His next attempt was a lamp — such a lamp as many a bride has blushed for and wept over. This met with a cool reception from Henrietta Hooper, who eyed him severely now when he called. He tried again wildly to retrieve his unconscious blunders, and beguiled by the advice of some friendly bookseller's clerk, sent his inamorata a volume of "The Wit and Humor of the Middle Ages," bound in half calf. Even this refined offering failed to please.

He complained bitterly to Miss Mott of his ill success. "I 'm going to chuck it up!" he

thundered. "If she don't like what I get, she can throw it overboard! Here I've lost all the headway I've made, and thirty dollars besides! Just as I was making up my mind to settle down, too! She can go and take that Elphingstone man she's all the time throwing up at me. No, by Cripes, I'll have her! I've just *got* to have Henny, Miss Mott! Can't you throw me a line and help me out?"

"I could show you how in two minutes, but you'd never do it."

"Why would n't I? Don't I think the world of Henny? I'd do anything — crawl on my hands and knees, lick her boots — anything!"

"But that's just exactly what you *must n't* do! You see, captain, the trouble is, you've been a little too gentle. You've been afraid of her. What she wants is to be bullied and ordered about and frightened half to death. Can you do that?"

Captain Bildad chuckled till his sides shook in spasms. "Can I do it? Can I *do* it? Me, Cap'm Bildad Cushman of the 'Emmy Lou'? Come down to the water-front and ask my mate! Ask in any sailor boarding-house! Of course I

ain't exactly used to treating women-folks that way, but if *that's* all she wants, by the Lord Harry, *I'll* frighten her! Let me loose! I'll go up now, and try it!"

He raged upstairs as if fighting back mutineers, and was gone for half an hour. He returned to report, with gusts of laughter.

"I believe you're more'n half right, miss, after all. I guess I give her the right medicine this time. It made me feel some like a scoundrel, for I ain't never give a woman a hard word in my life before, but she stood for it. Women certainly is queer craft! She begun on her Elphingstone game again, and I told her that if I ever met him, I'd pound him into strawberry jam and chuck him out of the window and her with him. Why don't he show up, anyway? that's what I asked her; why don't he come for her like a man? If he does, I'll show him how and why and when and where and whomsoever and all he wants to know about it. Ho, ho! Ha, ha!" and the captain roared again.

After he had left, Miss Hooper herself crept downstairs, white and trembling, to fall into Miss Mott's arms. "My dear," she wept, "I don't know *what* I'm comin' to, with two such violent

men! It was bad enough for Mr. Elphinstone threatenin' me with his wild letters, but I tell you Cap'm Bildad is somethin' *awful!* I believe I 'm in danger of my life! Why, he 's a perfect brute! And he 's always been so nice and respectful! I s'pose there ain't no accountin' for what a man will do when he 's in love. Bildad 's got an ugly streak in him that I never suspected at all. You should have *seen* the way he stormed round! and, my dear, he used words no gentleman should permit a lady to hear — least of all the woman he loves. He smashed two chairs, and shook his fist in my face, and actually demanded to see my last letter from Mortimer!"

"Did you show it to him?" asked the manicure.

"Why — yes — to tell the truth, I did it before I thought, I was that scared. But then you know, dear, the cap'm is really an old friend, and he is so fond of me I suppose I ought to allow him a little leeway, considerin' how passionate he is. He means all right, I expect, only he 's naturally headstrong. It 's a good fault, I must say."

She turned to go, then hesitated a moment.

"Say, Miss Mott, did you ever have a man strike you in anger? Any nice man, I mean — I ain't speakin' of common brutality."

"No, I certainly never did — did you?"

"No — I ain't!" Then Henrietta added dreamily, "But I should think it would be terrible excitin'."

The next day the captain called, to draw Miss Mott towards him with a tragic whisper.

"Say, Miss Mott," he commenced, "when I left this place yesterday, I had eight dollars in my coat pocket. Did you know that?"

"No, I did n't. Why? Did you lose it?"

"I went out and see a fire down towards Third Avenue, and I stopped to look. There was considerable of a crowd, and it was pretty thick where I was wedged into it."

"You don't mean to say that you had your pocket picked?"

"No, ma'am, I don't. What I mean to say is, I had my pocket *stuffed*, by jimminy! What d' you think of that? When I got home, I found a thousand and ten dollars in my pocket!"

"It does n't often happen," said the manicure, smiling.

"No, it don't. But say," the captain con-

tinued, "you know that young fellow Rayne, I see here so often, who comes to have his finger-nails overhauled? Well, he went down the street with me, and he was in the crowd beside of me all the time. I wish you 'd ask him if he was worked same as me!"

"I think you deserved it most, captain," said Miss Mott. "It will help you to get married, won't it?"

"That 's just what I 'm up to to-day! By jimminy, I 'm going to go for Henny this very day, and I won't come down without her! I 'm a rich man."

"If you want Henrietta, there 's only one thing to do," said Miss Mott.

"Do you mean to say I got to strike her? My God, it 's awful! Why, I could n't no more touch her than I could take a mallet to a sick baby. I 'd be ashamed of myself for a thousand years. Would she ever forgive me?" he asked anxiously.

"I 'm afraid she would, if you do it right," said Miss Mott. "If she refuses you, you 'll really have to use force."

The captain gloomed. "It ain't my way of making love," he said sadly. "I 'm more for

kissing and caressing; but there 's no accounting for tastes, and I 'll try to do my duty by Henny. I wish it was that Elphingstone I was a-goin' to thrash, though. Lord, think of me hitting Hen Hooper, that I 'm in love with! But I 'll do it! Perhaps I can manage without really hurting her. Anyway, I 'm not a-coming back alone."

He was gone a long time. It was twilight, and Miss Mott was gazing out upon the snowy street, the lights, the traffic, and the tide of pedestrians setting toward the great East Side, when the captain and Henrietta entered the parlors, the lady a willing, smiling prisoner in his strong right arm.

"I s'pose you 'll be surprised to see me actin' so silly at my time of life, Miss Mott," said Henrietta, "especially after the way I've talked, but the cap'm has persuaded me to become Mrs. Cushman. I had no idea in the world of ever gettin' married, but he was *so* sweet and lovely that I just had to give in."

"I 'm so glad for you both," said the little manicure. "Really, though, I 'm almost jealous. I am half in love with the captain myself. He 's such a dear, is n't he, Henrietta?"

"Is n't he? He 's so sweet — he 's a perfect lamb!"

"Never mind that!" said the captain sternly, avoiding Miss Mott's eye.

"And we 'll be so glad to have you here with us, for we 're going to live upstairs and take the whole top floor."

"I 'm sorry, but I 'm going to give up my business. I 'm leaving to-morrow," said Miss Mott.

"Well, now, that 's too bad! I was afraid it did n't pay very well, and that you had a dull time of it," Miss Hooper said. "My dear, I should think it would be stupid for you, here on the ground floor. Now if you only had a room where you had a view, you 'd see lots of more things to interest you. Here, it 's so quiet nothin' happens. Up where I am, I see everything, and I can take my mind off my work. You 're quite out of the world. Who knows but the captain would have been sendin' *you* presents, instead of me, if you 'd been upstairs!"

The captain began to cough, and his eye roamed furtively about the room.

"Henny!" he said finally in a broken voice, "I played you a dirty trick about them pre-

sents — I never gave one of 'em except the comb and brush and the lamp and the book! I have n't the least idea who sent 'em, but I s'pose it was that darned fool Elphingstone."

At his first words Henrietta Hooper's eye blazed in rage, then at the mention of her mysterious lover, she melted. She threw her arms about the captain's neck and wept.

"Oh, Bildad!" she wailed, "I don't know what you 'll *ever* think of me, but there ain't any Mortimer Elphinstone, and there never was, nor ever will be, so far as I know. I was so lonesome before I knew you, that I just wrote them letters to myself for the fun of it, so as to pretend that somebody cared for me!"

"You don't say so!" the captain exclaimed. "Well, I 'm glad he 's dead; that saves me one fight anyway." Then his face knotted in a puzzled expression, and he turned to the pretty manicure. "But I 'd like to know who the devil *did* send them things — would n't you, Miss Mott?"

Miss Mott said that she would, indeed.

V

A Miracle in B-Flat

I HAD been much interested in Stone Day's work long before I first called Miss Million's attention to his illustrations. Artists with any true decorative spirit and unconventional technique are rare enough nowadays, when magazines seek to set for a standard the photographic realities.

I think, however, it was in the hope for something a bit more piquant than her other adventures, that she took up posing. Her knowledge of art and artists was slight, and was associated with the obvious Bohemias of so-called Latin Quarter life. If, however, Miss Million went out most commonly for Romance, she often came home with something warmer and more human. Her particular kind of "sentimental charity" seldom missed fire.

She set me some difficult tasks, this time, and these had to be done with scant allowance of time. Luckily, I had organized my work in view of such sudden calls, and as money was no object to my

employer, I had many wires rigged, which I could pull at a moment's notice. Two hours were, then, sufficient time in which to find and deliver a spinet, and to equip Mr. Day's studio for the dénouement of this story. How, by one trick or another, by ruse and wile, she got his complete plan for the establishment, was in itself a story which entertained me many a night, in her apartments in East Fifty-Eighth Street.

And the name she took, for this adventure, shortened to "Peedeeweed," was my pet name for her, when, at last, I had the right to use one.

A Miracle in B-Flat

HAVE you ever posed before?" Stone Day asked.

No, she never had, but she thought she could, all right.

"I 've got some magazine illustrations to do, and I don't know but I can use you," the artist said, looking at her critically. "You might give me your name and address, if you will."

Pauline de Weed, 500 Twenty-Eighth Street. But it was "P. de Weed" when Stone Day had written it in charcoal on the gray ingrain wall-paper beside the door-jamb, and it was "P. de Weed" he called her after that.

"Can you begin to-day?" he asked. "I 'm all ready to go ahead, and I might as well see if you 're able to hold a pose."

Yes, she was ready, if her costume would do. If not, she had plenty of others; in fact, that was all she *did* have. They had been given her by some rich relatives, who of course did n't know she posed.

It was, indeed, the clothes and the air with which she wore them that had prepossessed Stone at first, and he did not hesitate to tell her so. But also he admitted that there was "a lot of stuff" in her face. "There 's some drawing in your nose and mouth," he muttered, as he inspected the girl frankly through narrowed eyes.

Miss de Weed had a face which, when seriously composed, showed a quaint, old-fashioned sort of earnestness; but when she smiled, it was with a gleeful abandon that half closed her hazel eyes delightfully, and pricked two deep dimples in her cheeks. She was *petite*, but her gracile figure, the distinction with which her head was set on her neck, and the massing of her hair showed such subtle, effective proportions that there was no emphasis in her size. The long, incurving lines of her three-quarter coat of white broadcloth showed the trimness of her waist, as the short skirt of the same material did the neatness of her ankles and well-shod feet. A square envelope hat with two scarlet plumes completed the picture, more effective for its setting in that wide, dingy, disordered studio.

She watched Stone with great interest, as he took up a canvas, adjusted it to his easel, and

moved a small table to a place beneath the skylight.

"Stand here, P. de Weed," he then said. "This thing is to represent a modern society girl standing against an old spinet. But I want to make it a good deal more than a pretty girl picture, and if it goes all right, I 'll paint it in color. That 's the only way to get the values right. Now, look as if you had just been spoken to, and lay your hand along what would be the keys of the instrument. That 's good. Wait till I take a look at the manuscript."

He delved into a heap of papers on the floor —art publications, photographs, sketches, newspapers, letters, a confused litter, and after a few expletives drew out some proof-sheets.

"This author will want me to illustrate the butler choking his heroine, I suppose. They always expect a dime-novel cover; they expect *me* to tell their story for them. I 'm going to make a dignified thing of this. Here we are — 'Miss Camish's eyes followed him' —do you think you can manage that?"

"It ought to be easy," she smiled, and took the pose, needing but few suggestions before the composition was arranged. Her position

was such that she could take only occasional glimpses at him, when she thought he was not looking.

Stone Day was a large, athletic-looking fellow of some eight and twenty years. He had a grotesquely rugged and boldly modeled face, which, in spite of the many blemishes of its complexion, was full of energy and simplicity and generosity. He showed traces of overwork and strain about his eyes, and the strong chin, not too heavy, and his large but well-formed nose gave an impression of reserved power.

"Are you tired?" he asked his model, after working silently for an hour.

"A little," she confessed. "The fact is, Mr. Day, I haven't had any lunch, and I feel a bit faint. I forgot to bring my purse with me. You haven't a cracker or anything here, have you?"

A quick, pained expression came, for a moment, over Stone's face; then he rose hastily. "Oh, I'm so sorry! You wait a moment, and I'll run out and get you something to eat. There's a restaurant just around the corner, and it won't take a minute."

He put on his hat, then hesitated, casting

his eyes about the room. They finally rested upon a violin beside the mantel. "Jove!" he exclaimed, "I forgot all about returning Smith's fiddle. I'll take it in to him, on my way." A minute later he had slammed the door behind him, and was running downstairs.

After he had left, Miss de Weed walked slowly about the studio. It was large, but scantily furnished, with little attempt at decoration. A few Japanese and German prints were pinned to the wall, and a pen-and-ink sketch "*à mon ami*, Day," stood on the mantel. A half-filled bookcase stood between the windows, and a collection of drawings and canvases upon the floor, their faces all turned towards the wall. The only interesting spot of color was a large blue Cloisonné jar, alone upon a shelf. Miss de Weed took it down to examine it, and her glance fell carelessly inside. Then she put it quickly back, with a smile. The jar held a collection of pawn-tickets — a dozen or more.

Stone soon returned, and, opening a pasteboard box, spread his refreshments upon the model-stand — sandwiches, a bottle of milk, cheese, and a little Charlotte Russe. As she sat down to this repast, Stone walked carelessly

over towards the shelf. Miss de Weed, watching him as carelessly, saw him take a pawn-ticket from his pocket and drop it into the jar.

When her pose was resumed, Stone went on with his work, scarcely speaking to her except occasionally to adjust her position, earnestly intent upon placing the composition well upon the canvas before the light faded. By five o'clock it was too dark to work longer, and he arose and yawned.

"I guess that 'll do for to-day, P. de Weed; you 're all right! I think I can do some bully good things with you. Come to-morrow at ten, will you?"

. . . . . .

Next morning Stone came running up the three flights of narrow stairs, a bottle of milk in one hand and his mail in the other, to find Miss de Weed waiting for him outside his door.

"I keep the key on this nail here," he explained, "and you can always go right in, if you want to. I 'm so glad you 're prompt. I 'm crazy to get to work — it 's months since I 've had a model with any brains." He opened

the door and walked into the studio. "For the love of Heaven, where did *that* come from!" he exclaimed.

Miss de Weed, following his look, saw a battered but picturesque old spinet standing in a corner.

"Why, did n't you get it?" she asked.

"I have plenty of things to spend my money on, besides buying spinets," he answered. "I 'd as soon think of buying a cloth-of-gold nightshirt or an ivory bootblack-stand. I need ham and eggs too much. There 's some mistake. I 'll have to ask the janitor about it."

"I thought you said — you needed — a spinet for your picture?" Miss de Weed said, frowning a little.

"Lord, I can put that in, in ten minutes, from the Encyclopædia. But we might as well use this, now we have it, before the owner comes for it. It was a funny coincidence, though, was n't it? Probably bought at an auction and sent to the wrong address. Let 's see what the old thing sounds like. It must be a regular tin pan by this time."

He lifted the lid and drew up a stool. "I only know one tune to play. My mother taught

it to me when I was twelve years old. I never got farther than that. Wonder if I can remember how it goes. See if you can recognize it."

He spread his fingers, bit his lip, and began. At the sixth note of the air, instead of the thin, metallic vibrations called from the other keys, there came a harsh, rattling sound.

"Oh, that's 'Robin Adair,' is n't it?" cried Miss de Weed.

"What there was of it," said Stone. "There's something the matter with B-flat. Kids been putting papers in the wires, probably. I used to, when I was a youngster. Let's have a look!"

He threw up the top, examined the strings closely, and then carefully removed something that had been neatly woven in and out between the wires. He whistled in astonishment, then held it up.

"What d' you think of that, P. de Weed? A hundred-dollar bill, by Jupiter! This is getting interesting."

As Miss de Weed watched him, her smile had grown more radiant. Now she clasped her hands in delight. "How lovely!" she cried. "It's real treasure-trove! I 'm so glad!"

Stone looked at the bill seriously. "No such luck," he said. "They 'll come for this, all right. I 'd better put it out of sight before I begin to imagine what I could do with it." He walked over to the Cloisonné jar and dropped the money inside.

The negro janitress, upon being interviewed, told him that the spinet had been brought at nine o'clock that morning by two teamsters, who had given Stone Day's name. The day passed, bringing no further information.

A week went by, and there was still no news, nor any claimant for the spinet; yet in spite of Miss de Weed's opinion that the bill was rightfully his, Stone would not use the money.

Meanwhile, the first illustration was finished, painted upon a small canvas in his close, faithful manner, and another pose was begun. Stone had so long struggled with inferior and unintelligent models, that Miss de Weed's cheerful, clever, and sympathetic assistance inspired him to better work than he had ever done before. Her patience was never wearied, her promptness was mathematical in its exactness, and her good nature endless. He began, therefore, gradually to permit himself a slight familiarity, though

he feared to spoil his good luck; but as, unlike most of his professional models, she took no advantage of this freedom, worked as conscientiously and talked as little as ever, he grew to treat her more and more as a friend in whom he might trust.

She, on her part, watched him carefully, noticing every sign of privation and courageous struggle that his face and clothes and habits all pointed at. His pretenses at having eaten breakfast were as obvious as the holes in his shoes. Bill collectors had so worried him that he had bored a peephole in the panel of his door, so that when any one knocked, he might protect his privacy by silence. Still, Stone Day's services were in good demand, and he was always busy, working on his black-and-whites often till late at night. The cause of his poverty was soon explained to his new model.

They were working together, one stormy November afternoon, when there came a little tapping at the door. Stone laid down his palette and waited without speaking, putting his finger warningly to his lips. The knock was repeated. He arose with a scowl, and, tiptoeing to the peephole, looked into the hall.

The scowl changed to a pleased smile as he threw open the door and admitted a young girl, scarcely eighteen.

She was a timid, wistful little thing, brown skinned, with a clever, pointed chin, whimsically shaped brows over deep gray eyes, and a triangular face, delicate in all its details of temple, nostrils, and ears. She was dressed cheaply, but with a certain odd, tasteful originality.

Stone introduced her to Miss de Weed as Miss Elsa Brand, giving each an equal consideration by the courtesy of his manner. Elsa immediately took a chair by his side and begged him to go on with his work. He consented, and continued with the pose, speaking to her occasionally, until the light had faded. Their relationship might have been, so far as most observers would notice, that of brother and sister. When Miss de Weed watched him, however, she suspected something closer and dearer; when she watched Elsa, she was sure enough to make up her mind.

"I wish we could all have dinner here!" Stone exclaimed, when his work was put away. "Would n't it be jolly! It 's so horribly

sloppy to go out. Perhaps we can have some tea, though, if there 's any left."

"That 'll be nice," said Elsa, "but first I want to see your spinet. I've heard so much about it! Is n't it a funny old thing! I do wish I could play on it!"

"If you can stand it, I 'll give you my whole repertoire, consisting of the one magic tune of 'Robin Adair,'" said Stone gayly. "The last time I played it, I won a hundred dollars. Let 's see if the spell still works." He sat down, and produced such an astonishing series of thin, metallic discords that Elsa soon held her hands to her ears.

"Nothing doing, evidently," he said, peering into the works and striking B-flat with mock insistence.

Miss de Weed had been buttoning up her mackintosh slowly, watching first one and then the other. At this last remark she smiled, as if inspired by some happy thought. Then she turned to go. Both Stone and Elsa begged her to stay and have tea with them, but pleading errands to do, she escaped their protests and ran downstairs.

"Do you know what happened after you

left?" Stone said to her next morning. "This place is bewitched, that's all! A half hour after you had gone, while Elsa and I were drinking tea out of tumblers and eating soda biscuit, two waiters burst into the room with a hamper full of champagne, ice cream, and hot ducks, and a tray full of dishes. They would n't tell me who had ordered it. Would n't that come and get you? I pass it all up! I can account for the spinet as a natural mistake, and the hundred-dollar bill as a miser's secret hoard; but a hot, expensive dinner appearing uncalled out of a snowstorm is simply too good to be true!"

"Did n't you play 'Robin Adair' on your magic spinet?" Miss de Weed asked, laughing.

"That's a fact! I forgot all about it! There must be something in the old thing, after all! But seriously, I don't see where the devil that grub came from — unless it was *you* did it! You're not in love with me, P. de Weed, are you?"

"Not to that extent," she laughed.

"I don't see how you could exactly afford to buy wine and ducks, posing for me at fifty

cents an hour — unless you are a princess in disguise," he said reflectively.

"No, I 'm not exactly that," said Miss de Weed.

"What did you think of Elsa?" was his next remark.

"I thought she was a dear! Do tell me about her."

"I will," Stone replied. "I want you to know her. I don't know but that you can help her — and me."

As he scraped his palette, mixed his paints, and blocked in his picture, his talk ran on. Sometimes, when his painting demanded close attention, he would work fifteen minutes without a word. Then he would lay down his palette, light his pipe, and continue his narrative. But for the most part, the story came out, two or three sentences at a time, interrupted by pauses, during which he looked at Miss de Weed as if she were nothing more intelligent than a lay figure.

Elsa had been a "State child;" supported, that is, at public expense in an orphan asylum in Massachusetts. Her parents, both English, apparently well-to-do and educated, had died

in a Boston hotel when Elsa was five years old, and no trace of their connections or residence had ever been found. At the asylum Elsa's life had been more than usually unfortunate, not on account of any unkindness on the part of the attendants, or the hardships of institutional trials, but because, on account of her elfin looks, she had been passed by, time after time, for more obviously pretty children, by visitors who came seeking children for adoption. It had been the tragedy of her childhood to long for some one to take her away, to be summoned and hurriedly dressed in the most presentable clothes the matron could find, to be shown to the visitor, watch in vain for some tender glance of interest or love — and to go back again into her gingham frock, to weep her heart out in despairing disappointment. As she approached the age of fourteen her sufferings became more poignant, for if she were not adopted by the time she reached that age, she would have to be bound out as a servant until she was twenty-one, to any one who made application for her services.

"She was within a few months of fourteen when I first saw her," said Stone, laying down

both palette and pipe now, to finish his story. "I happened to go through the institution, hoping to get a good child model, and Elsa was sitting by a window, alone, watching the clouds, with an expression I have never forgotten; though, thank God, I 've never seen her have it since. I don't know that you can see all an artist sees in her face, P. de Weed, but I saw that she was beautiful. I saw more than that. I saw sweetness and strength and humor; I saw a mind and a spirit. It came over me in a flash of intuition that I would never see just what I saw there in any woman's face again, though I should look for years, and I was wise enough or foolish enough to fall in love, then and there, with a little girl thirteen years old! Extraordinary, isn't it! But it's been done before. There was Swift and Stella, and there have been others — and there will be again. I got some friends of mine to adopt her, but I 've paid all her expenses ever since that day. I 've been waiting all this time for her to grow up, waiting for her to be educated, waiting for her to know a little of the world and other men, waiting for her to love me as I want to be loved — as I love her. She 's eighteen now, but I don't know whether

she cares for me or not. I 'm ten years her senior, but that ought n't to matter. I wish I could believe that she 'd ever care for an ugly, poor, stupid beggar like me! What d' you think, P. de Weed?"

"I think she does," said Miss de Weed. "I 've watched her, and I 've noticed a good deal — but of course not even a woman can be sure, always. But I think she 's very fond of you."

"If I could only find out some way," he said, walking up and down the studio, gazing at the ceiling; "but after all, I don't know but it would be worse if I did. I don't see how I could marry her. I can't save any money."

Miss de Weed found a smile at last. "I think you 'll have to play 'Robin Adair' again," she said jokingly.

He gave a grunt, half laughter and half scorn, and walked, still abstracted, to the old spinet, where he pulled up a chair and sat down. The air, distorted and discordant, came tortured from the tuneless keys.

"Abracadabra! Let the incantation work!" he muttered, as he struck B-flat. Then he arose and walked back to his easel.

At twelve o'clock Miss de Weed announced her intention of going out for her luncheon. Stone seemed a bit surprised. Heretofore, either she had brought food and they had eaten together in the studio, or they had gone across the street to sit up at a high counter, side by side. He was a hard worker, and made the most of his time downtown.

She returned at one o'clock, in high spirits, with a little bunch of violets, bought for him, she said, on the street corner. Apologizing for her delay, she set her feet in the chalk marks on the floor and took her pose.

At three o'clock there was a loud, officious knock on the door. Stone scowled and kept on working. The knock was repeated, more loudly. Stone did not appear to notice it. Miss de Weed, in this pose, held a wineglass, as if drinking a toast. At this moment, it fell from her fingers and crashed upon the floor.

Stone arose, his scowl deeper than ever. "I suppose I 'll have to open the door, now we 're discovered. I did want to finish this darned thing to-day, though. If it 's a collector, I 'll kill him!"

So saying, he threw open the door. A young

man, with a short black mustache and eyeglasses, appeared upon the threshold.

"Is this Mr. Stone Day?" he asked. Stone admitted the fact.

"Mr. Day," the stranger went on, "I got your address from one of the magazines, and I'd like very much to see some of your work, if you have time to show it to me. There are two or three of your drawings that have appeared lately and interested me a lot; I'd like to get hold of some of them, if you're willing to sell them."

"Come in!" said Stone, and his tone was cordial.

For half an hour the brisk young man questioned, examined canvases and drawings, criticised, gossiped, and at rare intervals cast a swift, furtive glance at Miss de Weed. She did not join the conversation, however, but, taking up a book, pretended to read. Once, during the discussion of a picture she was particularly fond of, she nodded surreptitiously. Once she shook her head.

When at last the young man left, Stone came and laid a cheque silently upon the table before her. It was drawn for four hundred dollars,

and signed "Winton Rayne." Miss de Weed smiled.

"'Robin Adair' made good, all right, did n't he?"

"I 'll never give that spinet up now!" Stone exclaimed.

There were gayer times in the studio after that. Stone, urged by both the girls, consented to let up a little in the pace he had set for himself. Elsa dropped in occasionally, and stopped for longer talks with Miss de Weed. Sometimes the model would come early, let herself in, and read till Stone came.

One day, finding her there in the morning, he began anxiously: —

"I saw Elsa last night, P. de Weed — I see her almost every night. I ought to stay away and give her a chance to see other men, but I can't! I 've simply *got* to find out how she feels about me. I don't think I ought to ask her until I know. I don't want her to sacrifice herself just for gratitude to me, and I 'm afraid she 'd be inclined to do it. I don't want her to take me from pity, either. I don't want her unless she loves me, truly and deeply. I want to be sure, and I want her to be sure. I want you to find out for

me. It seems a mean trick to put her to the test, but I think that the circumstances justify it. What do you say, P. de Weed?"

"Why, what do you mean?" she asked. "What can I do?"

"I 've been thinking it over," he said, "and as near as I can see, the old-fashioned test of jealousy is the only way. Suppose we managed to give her the idea that we are — well, a little fond of each other, you and I, d' you see? Now, if she is merely grateful to me for what I 've done, she 'll be rather glad to see me interested in a nice girl whom she likes; and she does like you. But if she cares for me the way I care for her, she 'll be jealous, won't she? She can't help it. Any woman would be, if she really loved a man. So, if we can make her jealous, I 'm sure of her, and I 'll marry her with a free conscience."

"I see," said Miss de Weed. "You want me to do a little acting with you. I don't know that I particularly agree with all your theories, though."

"It does seem a low-down trick, does n't it? I can't bear to think of hurting her, but it must be done."

"It's a very interesting experiment in psychology, at any rate," said Miss de Weed. "I think I'd like to try it."

. . . . . .

Stone himself could never have planned such a programme as was now put in operation for Elsa's benefit. Its details were the subtleties one woman instinctively knows will be most effective upon another. Stone followed Miss de Weed's orders and both watched the pathetic little victim, waiting for the first sign of apprehension. By this time Miss de Weed's poses were finished, and Stone had now no professional use for her. She came in often, however, and her visits had an extra significance because they were gratuitous.

Elsa often found the two apparently absorbed in conversations from which they withdrew somewhat reluctantly, or carried on in such a way that it seemed to include Elsa only at patronizing intervals. Miss de Weed's eyes seldom really left Stone, and she was quick to anticipate his wants, waiting upon him with an indulgent alacrity. She was often discovered dusting and rearranging the mantel or his papers, or serving him in any one of the many little ways which

Elsa had once considered to be her own privilege. Or, they would be playing chess together, interminable games which she begged them not to stop on her account, and which they often did not stop, though they seemed to separate her from them by an enormous intellectual distance.

Most effective of all was Miss de Weed's way of welcoming Elsa when she came, or, with Stone, bidding her farewell when she left, manifesting a cordiality which seemed to assume a part-proprietorship in the studio. Miss de Weed used the words "we" and "our" more often when she referred to Stone and herself, or served tea on the model-stand. Elsa was usually included in their plans, obviously as an afterthought, and, as she soon perceived, only when she happened to be present when those plans were made. There was reference to many little excursions occurring during her absence. A rather thick letter or two, addressed to "Stone Day, Esq.," in Miss de Weed's extravagant handwriting was often in evidence upon the table. Stone and Miss de Weed made many remarks to each other which were quite over Elsa's head, and these were never explained.

The two conspirators went so far, sometimes, as to exchange a few words in French, a language which Elsa was ashamed of never having studied.

If the girl suffered, in noticing these evidences of Stone's growing intimacy with Miss de Weed, she made no sign of jealousy, but treated them always with her habitual sweetness and cheerfulness, and took her place as third in the trio without protest. It became necessary, therefore, for Stone and Miss de Weed to complicate their strategy in the endeavor to force Elsa's hand, but the deceit hurt Stone almost more than he could bear. Elsa surrendered her privileges, one by one, almost proudly, as if she were conferring gifts, and at every such piece of magnanimity Stone's heart almost stopped beating.

The climax came one day, when, after knocking upon the studio door, Elsa heard a surreptitious confusion before she was admitted. For some time the conversation was constrained. Then Elsa looked at Stone composedly, and for the first time in weeks assumed her old place and manner.

"Stone," she said calmly, "I left my rubbers

at home, and my feet are wet. Would you mind going over to get them for me while I dry my shoes here?"

He arose, slightly surprised, but said, "Why, of course—I'll be glad to go for you," and taking his hat and umbrella, left the two girls alone.

Elsa came over to where Miss de Weed sat, and put her arm about her waist. "I sent him away on purpose, so that I could talk to you, P. de Weed," she confessed, "but I hated to make him go. You'll forgive me this once, won't you? I've something to say to you, dear." She laid her head on Miss de Weed's shoulder and looked across at the fire in the little grate, not noticing the other's smile and quick indrawn breath.

"I've worked it all out," Elsa began, "about Stone and you and me. Things have changed so during the last few weeks that at first I didn't know what to think or do. But now I see quite clearly. At first, I confess, it was hard for me to adjust myself, but now it's all so simple and easy that really I feel very peaceful and happy about it. Stone is in love with you, P. de Weed. Of course you know it, but I'm not sure that he

does yet, being a man. He 's known me for so long that it may be hard for him to acknowledge even to himself that he cares more for you than he does for me. He may even think — that I am in love with him. Of course I 'm not! But he 's so loyal and so good that he might want to sacrifice himself on my account. I want to make it perfectly easy for him. I want him to marry you, P. de Weed. It 's really the very best thing that could happen to him. You are exactly suited to each other, and you 'd both be happy. I 'm too young and inexperienced for him, and I want him to marry some one who is clever and good, one who can help him and be an inspiration to him in his work, as you can. You don't mind my talking so frankly to you, do you, P. de Weed?"

Miss de Weed could not answer for a moment, and sat silent, patting Elsa's hand. Then she said, "You 're a wonderful little girl, Elsa. I don't know how to answer you. I did n't expect you 'd take it like this."

"Oh, I 've thought so hard about it, wondering what I ought to do," said Elsa softly. "I 've lain awake so many, many nights thinking it out, but it 's all perfectly clear to me now. You

must n't think I 'm suffering in the least — I 'm not — I 'm *so* glad it 's all settled. I 'm really very, very happy, P. de Weed. Stone and I will still be good friends, and I can be your friend, too, can't I ? "

" Indeed you can, dear, though I don't deserve it," said Miss de Weed, kissing her on the cheek, and leaving there a tear or two.

" Stone is selling so many pictures now that he can afford to get married soon. I hope he will," Elsa went on. " He is n't living the right way at all, now, you know. He needs some one to take care of him and see that he eats regularly and gets exercise enough. Perhaps you 'll be able to fix up the studio the way he 's wanted to for so long. He would love so to have beautiful things about him. He 's planned it all out so many times with me, I know just how it would be. Oh, but of course he must have told you, too," she sighed.

" Yes," said Miss de Weed, " he 's talked to me about it. He is so fond of old mahogany and brasses and tapestries and rugs, is n't he? "

" Oh, but I love it as it is, though," said Elsa, rising and going to the fireplace. " I love this dear little old grate, and the torn paper on the

walls, and the cracks in the floor — and everything about it. Is n't it lovely when the twilight comes, and you can see the lights over there glowing under a red, smoky sky? Did you know that there 's one little place between the roofs where you can see the river at sunset? Then, it 's so quiet here. I 've come in so many times just as he was finishing his work and sat and talked. Oh, I do hope I can do something for him occasionally. You 'll always let me know if there 's anything I can do, won't you? Perhaps while you 're away I can stay here sometimes."

Her eyes wandered about the room, and then a brave little smile fluttered on her lips. "Is n't it strange about that old spinet? Where could it have come from? Was n't it fine of Stone not to use that money? But now I think he ought to. The old spinet *has* brought him luck, has n't it? Just think — every time he has played 'Robin Adair' something perfectly lovely has happened. I wonder if it would if I played it. I 'd love to bring him some good luck! I 'm going to try, P. de Weed. I feel almost superstitious about it. Perhaps I can pick it out with one finger. Let 's see — how does it go?"

She took up the first line of the air with a soft, pretty voice, quavering a little: —

"'What 's this dull town to me?
Robin 's not here!'"

She sat down to the spinet, and with her little gloved forefinger struggled up the scale until she came to B-flat. Then she stopped and turned her head away from Miss de Weed and rose, biting her lip. Her self-possession returned in a moment, however, and she even succeeded in a wan smile. Then she went towards the door.

"It 's fine of you to take it so simply, P. de Weed," she said, bravely holding out her hand. "But I was sure you would, if I were honest with you. Now I must get away before Stone comes back. I 'm going home to write him a letter that will explain everything, and give him absolute freedom. Good-by, dear heart, I 'm *so* happy!"

She went out the door quickly and disappeared down the stairs. Miss de Weed arose now, and tiptoed to the landing. She heard the footsteps patter along the hallway below and start down the second flight of stairs. Then they went slower, and stopped. There was an interval of

absolute silence. At last they started down again resolutely.

A quarter of an hour later, Stone appeared, and looked about the studio in surprise. "Why, where 's Elsa ? " he exclaimed.

" She 's gone home," said Miss de Weed, " and if you take my advice, you 'll lose no time in following her."

" Ah, she 's jealous at last?" he asked, with a great hope showing in his face.

" No, she 's *not* jealous ! " said Miss de Weed.

His face was drawn and haggard now.

" Stone Day," said Miss de Weed quietly, putting on her coat, " you have a good deal yet to learn about women. Elsa is not jealous — she 's no more capable of that than she is of revenge. She 's too sweet and fine, she 's too big for that sort of selfishness. I wanted to prove to you that you can't test a fine woman by common jealousy. There 's only one way to test a woman, and that is by magnanimity. There 's no height of generosity that a woman who is nobly in love won't rise to, there 's no passion so strong as a true woman's desire to sacrifice herself for her lover. Elsa loves you as you scarcely deserve to be loved; and if you

want a noble, devoted girl for your wife, go after her now, before she has suffered a moment longer!"

"But how do you know?" he demanded wonderingly.

"Because I 'm a woman and have eyes, I suppose. I 've seen it from the first, but I wanted you to be sure. Ask *her* how I know. Go this instant and tell her everything. Then take her to dinner and bring her back to this studio she loves so much."

He left her alone in the twilight, and hurried downstairs.

. . . . . .

It was after nine o'clock that evening when Stone came back, with Elsa blissful upon his arm. There was a scrap of paper under the door. He picked it up and read it aloud.

"DEAR S. AND E., — I have been suddenly called out of town, and don't know just when I 'll see you again, so wish you both joy.

P. DE WEED."

"Funny she did n't say anything about it this afternoon," Elsa remarked. "I hope it is n't sickness or trouble."

"You don't think she — she could have really cared?" Stone ventured.

"Perhaps she *was* in love with you. I don't see how she could ever help it," said Elsa. "But she seemed so happy!"

He unlocked the studio door and stepped in. His foot fell upon a soft rug. Even in the darkness the place seemed strange and changed. Then, walking toward the gas-jet, he struck against a heavy table. He scratched a match, and the flare was reflected from the polished planes of mahogany and danced in the dull glow of brasses. He gave a cry of surprise, and Elsa clung to him in affright.

Then he reached for the gas-jet and lighted it. The room was transformed with heavy rugs and rare old tapestries, old furniture and odd ornaments of brass and porcelain. Every article he had ever mentioned was there in its place as if he himself had arranged it. Heavy, dewy bunches of violets on mantel and tables sent a refreshing odor that permeated the place. They stood and looked from piece to piece in bewilderment. Then he stopped suddenly and turned to Elsa with a queer expression.

"The spinet is gone!" he exclaimed.

"Why, so it is! Our magic spinet!"

Then she sank into an easy chair and smiled up at him. "Oh, Stone, do you know — I just remember, now — I tried to play 'Robin Adair' on it this afternoon — but I broke down and almost cried — I had to stop."

"On B-flat?" he asked seriously.

"Yes!" Elsa's eyes were open wide.

Then she added, "I 'm almost glad it 's gone. I would have been afraid of it. And we would never have dared to play 'Robin Adair' on it again. It has brought us so much. It has brought us all we can ever want, has n't it, dear? It has brought us each other! But is n't it too bad P. de Weed is n't here to enjoy it all? She 'd be *so* surprised!"

Stone Day thrust his hands in his pockets and began to think. After a moment's silence his face broke into a smile.

"No," he said, "I don't think she 'd be so much surprised as pleased, Elsa. I have an idea that she understands this sort of magic — as well as she understands women."

VI

A Christmas Cinderella

THIS story is, perhaps, more appealing to women than to men, for it is a tale of setting rather than plot, and of temperament rather than of "love and action," as the magazine editors say. Women, I mean, will understand better the state of Ella Norris's unrest and her craving for the many foolish little things that were denied her.

I think it was a remark of mine that led Miss Million off on this track. She was commenting upon the way a school-teacher professed to enjoy her work.

"Was she a kindergartner?" I asked, a bit sarcastically.

"Why?" said Miss Million.

"Because," I informed her, "a kindergartner has one of the few professions that attempts to compel happiness and enthusiasm as one of its duties."

Miss Million seemed struck by the observation.

A Little Sister of Destiny

How Miss Norris was selected, I am not sure, though I know that she was not the first one visited. As Reba White, Miss Million did much investigation before she found the heroine she wanted — one with a true imagination, a sense of the Relative Importance of Things, and one, moreover, at that "dead centre" in her career where a school-teacher is apt to be most in need of Romance.

I did my share in the preparation for this little drama, but Miss Million needed all her own ingenuity, especially in such details as the making of the costumes, to ensure a success. It was my part to study Merryng, and as we worked separately, it happened that there were four persons to be surprised at a dénouement which the reader, of course, from my manner of telling, must foresee from the beginning. The story, however, is too dependent upon other things for that to matter — at least, I think, so far as regards women readers.

A Christmas Cinderella

THE new nursemaid was a decided success. As Miss Ella Norris, the head kindergartner, watched the girl, she congratulated herself upon the acquisition.

Reba had already dusted the room, placed the big box containing the "second gift" on Miss Norris's round table, and counted out the sticks and tablets for the next day. She was now greeting the children as they entered, pink-cheeked and snowy, hanging up their garments, and making an occasional trip to the washstand with some reluctant youngster. She was a slender, graceful girl of twenty-three years, modestly gowned in a navy-blue serge suit, with smart collar and cuffs which called attention to the exquisite carriage of her small head and her delicate, clever hands. As she stooped over the refractory little Italians and Hebrews, her face was animated with an engaging by-play of crinkled, half-shut eyelids and dimples that played in and out of her cheeks.

Reba was not a trained kindergartner, but she

enjoyed her new work enthusiastically and intelligently, and had already proved her worth; for besides her regular work, she played the piano and led the singing with grace and spirit. Miss Norris was beginning to find Reba as much of a companion as a helper.

Ella Norris herself was of a different type, and had a less alluring feminine charm. She was taller, her face was sharper and made more boyish by a mass of crisp, almost wiry, curling hair. The severity of her erect, vigorous figure and cleanly chiseled features was, however, tempered by her clear blue eyes, which shone in a direct, straightforward gaze, and still more by the simplicity and sincerity of her speech. She had been seven years in the harness, and though still as conscientious as ever, at times there were in her expression symptoms of the inevitable unrest of the young school-teacher, due to the limitations of her routine. She was apparently at that crisis where hope, if not ambition, falters.

To-day, perhaps, this was more evident than usual. The new class was crowded and unruly. Miss Norris's irritation was given no expression in word or in tone, but her work became more

like labor and she performed it mechanically. When the time came for "free play," she stood by the window with Reba, watching her charges with an alert ranging eye, and for the first time confided in her assistant.

"Look at them!" she exclaimed, in a tone whimsically petulant. "Look at that herd of kobolds who have me in their power! — Yes, Josef, you may water the little seeds we planted last week and see if they've waked up yet." She turned wistfully to Reba. "Did you ever read 'The Princess and the Goblins' and the rest of the 'Curdie' books by George Macdonald?"

"Oh, yes," said Reba, "I should say I had! I remember especially how the princess was lost and captured in the underground passages away inside of the mountain."

"That's just the way I feel, somehow. I seem to be out of the world, and forced to be a slave to these little gnomes and pixies. — No, Josef, not so much water. Be careful, or you'll drown them. Pauline, you go and show him how to do it."

"Perhaps Curdie will come and rescue you some time," said Reba. "Don't you remember

how he used to frighten away the goblins with his rhymes and take the princess home?"

"There's precious little chance of Curdie's ever finding *me*," said Miss Norris. "I don't have a chance to meet any men at the Johnsons', where I room, and even if I did, no one would ever suspect a school-teacher of having any imagination or romance. — Yes, Judith, I see. Your horse is very pretty, but he has only three legs, and he would n't be able to run very fast. Try it again, dear. Thank you, Walter, you 're a real little helper."

"Oh, I know how Gulliver felt," she went on, "when he woke up and found himself bound by thousands of little threads, a giant forced to do the will of dwarfs. That 's the school-teacher's life. They think you ought to be happy and contented because you have to be with forty children all day long. — Josie, you must let Max look at that picture-book too."

"Don't you know any men at all?" asked Reba.

Miss Norris smiled, and drew a little yellow-haired urchin to her side affectionately. "The only man in my world is one who lives upstairs

in the room over mine. And all I know about him is that he comes running upstairs every morning at one or two o'clock. Then he walks back and forth for an hour, and finally throws his boots down on the floor. It 's just like the rest of my life. It 's all cut and dried and juiceless. There 's absolutely nothing to look forward to — not even Christmas. I know I shall go to Aunt Jane's and spend a perfectly stupid day, and come back with half-a-dozen embroidered lawn handkerchiefs, a dull book, and perhaps a pair of bed-shoes."

She turned wearily to her class, and with an effort assumed her professional sweetness of manner. "Now, children, play that you 're little kitties, and see how softly you can creep into your seats. We have a new card to sew to-day."

After school was over, as Reba was picking up the things, Miss Norris sighed. "Oh, I wish *something* would happen! I don't insist upon an adventure. I don't care if it 's only a knot or a snarl in this long string of monotony."

"I know what you ought to do," Reba exclaimed. "You ought to answer a 'Personal' I saw in the paper this morning. I 'll show it to you."

She ran out and brought back a paper, from which she read with merry emphasis: —

> "ANY ONE desiring an original and interesting Christmas present, who will write stating exactly what is wanted, will hear of something to his advantage by addressing Box 152, Herald."

"What a ridiculous advertisement! It must be some sort of advertising scheme, don't you think, Reba? Oh, of course, it might be the idea of some charity or a millionaire, but rich people never have enough imagination for that. I suppose they 'll get hundreds of letters. It would be rather fun to answer it, would n't it? I 'd never dare to, though."

. . . . . .

Two days afterward, Miss Norris came to school with a new light dancing in her blue eyes. She sat down and drew off her gloves, saying, "What do you think, Reba? I answered that advertisement after all, and I 've just got a reply!"

"Have you, really?" said Reba, going on with her dusting. She kept her face turned away for a moment, and then added: "Do tell me about it!"

"I went home and thought it all over," Miss

Norris replied. "It came over me again that I lived in a world I could see but not touch. I think I have fine instincts about things. I think I could be rich beautifully, and what I 'd like most of anything is to have one chance at playing the lady, if only for a day. It is n't that I want to be a heroine of romance or a princess, but I 'd like to have all my surroundings right for just once — wear the beautiful clothes, especially those luxurious, unpractical, exquisite things that we can't afford, and would have no chance to wear if we could. I want to live in a beautiful house just long enough to talk with a man who is neither a fool nor a fop nor a flirt, and who would never suspect me of being a kindergartner."

"Did you write all that?"

"Yes, and more. And I 've got an answer that I positively don't dare to believe — it 's so wonderful! It 's in a woman's handwriting, and it 's signed 'M. M.' She says she will hire a suite of rooms in the St. Elmo for Christmas day, and I can stay there until midnight. If I have any fear about accepting her offer, I may take a companion. She offers to provide everything I wish — clothes, meals, servants, every-

thing. Oh, and the most wonderful part of all, she offers to invite some one to come to dinner, and she guarantees him to be a gentleman. What would you do, Reba?"

"Do! I'd *go*, of course!" said Reba. "You may be sure that no woman would be able to do that for you at the St. Elmo unless she were all right; and oh, Miss Norris, won't you let me come and be your maid? I'm sure I could do it beautifully in a lace cap and apron."

"Oh, would you? If you will, I'll accept it. I wonder who she can be."

"I'm wondering more who the young man can be," said Reba. "But, good gracious, it's ten minutes to nine! I must let those blessed infants in."

Miss Norris's eyes had idly followed Reba's movements as she tucked her gold watch into her belt. "Why, what a beautiful watch!" she exclaimed. "I never noticed it before. Those garnets on the back look almost like rubies. What does the 'M' stand for?"

"It used to belong to my Aunt Margaret," said Reba. "They do look like rubies, don't they?" She flew out to the front door.

. . . . . .

A Christmas Cinderella

In a front room on the fourth floor of an uptown lodging-house a young man named Merryng sat writing. He had a first name, but it was so long since he had heard it that it would have come to him almost as a shock if it were spoken aloud. He had been but two years in New York, and the newspaper office where he worked, as Federal Court reporter, did not encourage easy familiarities. He had few opportunities to make friends elsewhere, his hours being long and late.

When Merryng was free from the routine, he spent his time in an avocation which separated him even more from ordinary human sympathy. His employment upon this particular December noonday was characteristic of his hidden life. He was writing a poem of that sort usually affected by the young, the ingenuous, and the æsthetic — especially fancied, perhaps, by those who have been steeped in the classical courses of a college curriculum.

He looked up from a mass of scrawled papers, whose lines sang of nymphs and groves and fountains, Hymettus, Nepenthe, Hylos, and such Greek images, and, lighting his pipe, began to pace the floor as poets must.

Walking, he surveyed the room carelessly, and noted every horrible solecism of his landlady's taste — gilded bamboo easel, velvet mantel-drape, painted plaque, black walnut furniture, and pictures too distressing for description. At last, wearied mentally as well as physically, he threw himself upon his lumpy couch, and with a yawn picked up the morning paper. He got no farther than the first column of the front page, for there his eye stopped at the following "Personal:" —

> "ANY ONE desiring an original and interesting Christmas present, who will write stating exactly what is wanted, will hear of something to his advantage by addressing Box 152, Herald."

The paper dropped from Merrying's hand, and he passed into a day-dream, spending himself in speculation upon the meaning of the notice and its possibilities. His training had fostered a cynical view of life; for owing to his acquaintanceship with the Federal Secret Service agents, he was an authority on every form of confidence-game extant. He had grown, in fact, almost to suspect a man to be a fakir until proven honest; and the newspaper advertisements were to him things almost humorously

incredible. He had to confess now, however, that this was a scheme beyond his experience, and the temptation to investigate it was irresistible. He decided to make his researches, however, in a private rather than in a professional spirit. As he wrote, therefore, something of his poetic temperament came out, and inspired by the romantic suggestion of the notice, he took the offer insensibly more and more seriously.

"Box 152.

"Dear Sir or Madam, whose sublime suggestion kindles this question in my eager breast, may I not hope that I shall be requited and not be slighted in your bequest? What would I have unique and interesting? What am I questing for Christmas cheer? My Muse I seek, indulgent and inspiring, her favor firing, divinely dear. Send me some blue-eyed, fascinating maiden whose lips are laden with words of praise — a loyal friend to whom you shall confide me, to help and guide me through dreaming days. To her may I indite my wayward fancies, my mad romances and idling prayer; if she accepts the fruit of my emotion, I have devotion for her to share!"

"There!" he exclaimed, as he signed his name with a flourish. "I think that ought to hold 'em for a while. If there 's possibly anything behind it, they may be interested, but if it 's a faking scheme, of course I 've sawed myself off. It does n't sound as if it came from Rahway, New Jersey, where the come-ons dwell. I 'll post it, though, just for the fun of it, and probably never hear from it again."

As Merryng walked up and down the room dressing for the afternoon, he grinned at the thought of his vagary. "It would be a big thing for me," he said to himself, "if I only *could* find some blue-eyed Athene at whose shrine, etc., etc. But I'm afraid I shall have to content myself with the inspiration of that girl downstairs, who always wakes me up by warbling, 'Every morn at eight o'clock I bring thee violets.'"

. . . . . .

It was early on a clear, cold Christmas morning when Miss Norris and Reba called at the office of the Hotel St. Elmo for the key to the mysterious apartment. They rode up the elevator in silence, holding each other's hand. The door of the suite was opened; they walked in and closed it behind them.

Miss Norris made a dash through the rooms — hall, reception-room, parlors, dining-room, library, and bedchambers. She came back, her blue eyes burning with excitement. "Oh, Reba," she exclaimed, "it 's marvelous! It looks as if a marchioness had only just left — I never saw such luxury, such pictures and rugs and furniture! You should see the clothes hanging in the closets!" She stopped her rhapsody to gaze at Reba, who had been busy with her costume, and now stood, sweetly deferential, in the cap and apron of a lady's maid.

"Shall mademoiselle put on now ze *negligée?*" said the girl demurely.

For answer, Miss Norris hugged her. "Oh, you lovely thing!" she exclaimed. "I almost forgot you were my maid. I shall have to call you Babette. Well, Babette, you may come and help me, please. I 'm going to begin at the very beginning."

In ten minutes, Miss Norris, dressed in a pale blue silk *peignoir*, sat in bed propped up against lace-trimmed pillows, sipping chocolate and nibbling crisp French *croissons* and hothouse strawberries. Half an hour later, tubbed, and emitting a fresh odor of violet, clad in a dis-

tracting lace *liseuse*, she was gazing into the mirror of the low dressing-table, while Reba loosely coiled her hair. As they laughed and chattered, they were surprised into silence by the sound of the doorbell.

Reba ran out into the hall, to return with a huge box, which when opened showed, beneath layers of tissue paper and damp cotton-wool, a magnificent mass of white roses and violets. Miss Norris uttered an exclamation of delight, but Reba recalled her to her high-bred pose with a glance of comic gravity.

At nine o'clock, Reba admitted a manicure girl, who kept Miss Norris amused for an hour until a hairdresser appeared. While these women were in the apartment, her demeanor was dignified in the extreme, though her languid, bored tone was at variance with the sparkling light that danced in her blue eyes, as she ordered her Babette on little useless errands, or gossiped patronizingly.

At eleven o'clock, she began the serious work of the forenoon. This consisted in reclining amidst a foam of laces upon a wide couch, and tasting, page by page, the score of new books which Reba brought in from the library table.

As her amateur maid fluttered to and fro, chattering with a dainty French accent and commenting upon the apartment, Miss Norris coquetted with two or three volumes at a time, raising her eyes occasionally to gaze as if in a dream at the tapestries, the pictures, the carved furniture, all of which were blended into a pattern of rich dull tones, her glance stopping where, behind a shimmering glass and silver screen, an open fire twinkled.

At one o'clock, Miss Norris, dressed in a trailing green velvet suit, so smart that it distracted her attention from the luncheon, sat in silent state in the dining-room, attended by two obsequious servants. She was almost successful in not showing her awe of them.

After a deliciously idle hour, Reba appeared with a fur-lined leather automobile-coat, and announced that Miss Norris's motor-car was waiting below. The two descended to the street; and here the dream shifted to visions of snowy pavements and noble houses swimming by, vistas of park and river, whizzing cars like their own which raced with them or dashed past, high-stepping horses, and richly furred ladies; and through this turbulent joy, always the

broad manly back of a silent chauffeur in front of them, who never turned or spoke. They came back tingling with the cold and enlivened with the fresh air, to find tea set out in a silver service before the blazing fire. At seven o'clock, it was time to dress for dinner, and Miss Norris's excitement mounted at the thought of her approaching guest.

She was ready early, in a princess gown of black chiffon over cloth-of-gold, with medallions of black lace butterflies and a string of large pearls.

"Babette," she asked, "would you think I 'd ever been a kindergartner and talked about cubes and spheres, and sung 'Thumbs and fingers say good-morning'? If there 's the slightest trace of Froebel about me at this moment, I want you to tell me."

"Mademoiselle," said Reba prettily, "I have not a long time seen some one so charrrming as you!"

Exactly at eight o'clock the hall bell rang. Miss Norris's hand closed tightly upon her point-lace handkerchief. Reba patted her on the cheek, and then pirouetted airily to the door and threw it open.

A young man in evening dress appeared upon the threshold. He was light haired and brown eyed, with a square face, cleanly shaven and strong featured, which cracked into droll wrinkles when he smiled. His voice had just enough of New England nasal drawl to give to every remark he made a slightly humorous effect.

"Does Miss Norris live here?" he asked.

"Mademoiselle is awaiting you in ze drawing-room."

She took his hat and coat and led the way, announcing him as "Mr. Merryng." Then she retired, leaving the two alone.

. . . . . .

Reba was finishing the dinner which had been brought in to her on a tray when Miss Norris hurried into the room.

"Oh, Reba," she exclaimed, "he's perfectly lovely! I had n't any idea a man could be so sweet and so strong at the same time. And do you know he is the author of 'The Newer Eden'? Don't you remember that little book of poems I always keep on my desk? Think of it! He did n't tell me, either, until I accidentally found it out. I happened to quote two

or three lines, and you should have seen him blush! Did you ever see a man blush, Reba? It's the most amusing thing! And he is so sympathetic and chivalrous, and he understands everything. It's almost like talking to another woman."

As she spoke, she had turned to the mirror and stood rearranging her hair with nervous uplifted hands, although Reba's keen eyes saw that Miss Norris was too excited and preoccupied to realize quite what she was doing or saying.

"We got on like two trotting horses," she continued. "You know how their hoof-beats sometimes are all mixed up and then suddenly they fall into the same rhythmic pace? You must hear him talk, Reba. Listen — I'll ring for you to bring in a scarf for my neck, and you stay round as long as you can." She fluttered happily out of the room.

Reba now flew into a bustle of activity. There was a large trunk in the dressing-closet which she went to first of all and threw open, removing the trays. The bottom she filled with the slippers that paved the closet. Above these she packed, one after the other, the walk-

ing-suit that Miss Norris had worn to the hotel, the blue silk *peignoir*, the lace *liseuse*, the green velvet, and the automobile-coat. One whole tray was devoted to a long, plethoric pale-blue feather boa, to numberless scarves, to boxes of silk stockings and lace handkerchiefs. Into the many compartments of the top tray went the intricate delicacies of the toilet which had filled the bathroom and covered the dressing-table. As she was stealing into the library for the new books, she heard the bell ring, and hurried guiltily back, to emerge, sedate and prim, to answer the summons.

Miss Norris was leaning forward in an old high-backed chair, her eyes following Merryng as he paced up and down the drawing-room, talking earnestly. He stopped for a moment as the maid entered.

"Babette," said Miss Norris, "I wish you 'd fetch me a scarf for my shoulders and bring in those roses from the dining-room, please."

When Reba returned, Mr. Merryng did not pause in his conversation, and as she busied herself for a moment at the table, he was saying:—

"It 's so wonderful to find out that there are

women in the world like you. I never met one before to whom I could talk as impersonally as to a man, and who had all the sympathy of a woman besides. Why, I 've told you things that I 've never dared mention to any one else!"

"I think I do understand you, perhaps," Miss Norris answered, "and I would like to help you and encourage you. It 's a strange way we 've come together, is n't it? Rather like a beatified practical joke."

"It 's no joke to me," said Merryng warmly.

"Such a thing can happen only once," she went on. "Let us make the most of it and the best of it this evening, for our lives are far apart. This is but a chance meeting of two roaming souls, and after to-night we must pass on according to our orbits."

"But why?" he demanded. "Why not continue, now that we have found each other?"

Reba heard no more, having loitered in the room as long as was decently possible; she returned to resume her clandestine packing. When it was finished, she took a tag from her satchel and wrote upon it the address, "Miss Ella Norris, 180 East Twenty-Fourth Street." This she fastened to the handle of the trunk.

Then she opened a door into the hall and stood for a moment listening. Mr. Merryng's voice was heard rising and falling in smooth cadences as he repeated flowing stanza after stanza, Miss Norris stopping him occasionally for appreciation or criticism.

Ten o'clock struck on the melodious chimes of the hall clock. The hour progressed, heralded by the music of the quarter chimes, to eleven o'clock and half past. Then the maid's bell tinkled, and Reba went into the drawing-room.

The light from the great lamp illuminated the two as they sat side by side upon the couch, their heads together over a note-book which Merryng was showing Miss Norris.

"I suppose that 's the way it comes, usually," he was saying. "Some accidental incident or suggestion occurs to me, and I put it down here, as I have put your name and the date. There 's no knowing when I shall come back to it, but I 'm pretty sure to find it has grown in the dark to a perfect poem." He put the note-book in his pocket and rose. "Well," he said, "if you are inexorable, and if we must part forever, I suppose the time has come."

"Any meeting after this is bound to be an

anti-climax," Miss Norris replied. "We've had a wonderful experience to-night. Let's end it artistically. Babette, have you packed my dressing-bag? Then get me my sable cloak and telephone down to the office to have two foot-warmers put in the carriage. I'm going to put Mr. Merryng down at his rooms on my way to the Johnsons'." She turned to Mr. Merryng again. "Oh, the Johnsons are so stupid," she said. "I wish I did n't have to go there to-night. There's a young man there who bores me to death. I hope I won't have to have anything to do with him."

Reba returned, helped Miss Norris on with her furs, and the party left the apartment, Miss Norris casting one last pathetic look behind. A brougham was awaiting them at the door, and Miss Norris stepped lightly in.

"I shall send the carriage right back for you after I get to the Johnsons', Babette. Mr. Merryng, just give the driver your address, please," and she sank back into the cushions.

Mr. Merryng went up to the man on the box. "Drive to 180 East Twenty-Fourth Street," he said. Then stepping in beside Miss Norris, he slammed the door.

A Christmas Cinderella

For a moment after the carriage had driven away, Reba stood on the sidewalk, the dimples rioting in her cheeks, her lids half closed in merriment.

"180 East Twenty-Fourth Street — the Johnsons' lodging-house!" she repeated to herself. "Poor, dear Cinderella! At midnight your coach will have turned to a pumpkin and all your clothes to rags — your prince will have found you out! But I don't think you 'll care, for his name is Curdie, and he will rescue you from the goblins with his rhymes."

VII

Not to Speak of Cicely

IT was not in the East Side tenement districts that Miss Million preferred to work. She was for less obvious local color, for experiments with persons more nearly of her own sort. It was her maxim that "Spend helps Save, and Save helps Scrimp, and Scrimp helps Suffer, and Suffer helps Starve" — charity, in a word, to be effective, cannot well skip classes; it must come from those nearly allied in experience — all charity, that is, which is not institutional.

How wise she was, these adventures may show. Hers was, it is true, "sentimental charity" — if it were charity at all. She herself preferred to consider it as pure adventure, and the assistance she rendered as merely the modus operandi of romance. To stand as a little sister of Destiny — that was her game; and I think she played it well, and few millionaires have, I think, in simple, honest enjoyment, got such worth for their money.

I myself helped, perhaps, less in this than in

most other adventures, but still I was by no means idle. For a while I occupied a room in the boarding-house, and was privileged to watch her, as a servant, bring the house into subjection. She was the true Princess in disguise, and played her part without suspicion. Old Mrs. Peterborough and I watched her as she watched the others, with tears, sometimes, in our eyes. You may think of her or not as the heroine of the tale, but to me, as goddess from the machine, she truly, as the actors say, "created a part."

Not to Speak of Cicely

THERE was a large and a small table in the dining-room of the boarding-house. The large one was usually filled with perfect examples of well-known types. There was the dowager with the silken thorax, plus jet trimmings, the thin, anæmic, affable, wise young man with the high forehead; there was the voluptuous widowette, placidly flirtatious. The small table held, with some good-natured crowding, the select coterie of the house — Miss Meadows and the Three. The real names of the Three do not matter, for Cicely the maid had, early in her acquaintance, nicknamed them Shem, Ham, and Japheth. For them and for Miss Meadows Cicely did extra-official service in all ways and sundry.

The boarders at the large table took it for granted that they would receive a clean serviette and a new tablecloth at each meal. They made no comments upon the silver service, or the stationery in the library. They accepted their fresh linen sheets, their thick, tender steaks,

the flowers, and the two bath-towels a day as a matter of course — as they accepted indulgent, white-haired Mrs. Peterborough for their landlady. They recommended the place to their friends patronizingly, and were often surprised to have them rejected upon what seemed to be trivial grounds.

The Three and Miss Meadows, however, were more sapient. They were aware of the fact that they were occupants of a remarkable boarding-house. Few places, as Shem pointed out, provided, gratis, such cigars, after dinner, as Mrs. Peterborough's "Flor de Million." Ham knew well that the inhabitant of the ordinary hall bedroom seldom found himself treated to boot-trees and coat-hangers. Japheth had never before heard of seven dollars a week including electric night-lights by which one could read comfortably at all hours. As for Miss Meadows, she was loud and jubilant in her praises of the violet water, the bath-herbs, the sacheted dress-hangers, the tape towels, and the cheval-glass with which her room was furnished. These phenomena were the subject of much futile conjecture at the small table, the inevitable result being that Miss Meadows and the Three

would congratulate one another, and knock the under side of the mahogany, lest their good luck should fly away.

Miss Meadows was a tall, statuesque, imperious, golden-haired, blue-eyed creature, well dressed, well kept, well poised, and perfectly aware of her own powers to charm. She occupied a front room on the second floor, where, for at least four hours every day, her typewriter could be heard intermittently, as she ground out the verses and short humorous articles for which she was becoming well known to magazine readers. Everything about Miss Meadows was finished, graceful, and dainty, from her nails and eyebrows to her *vers de société*. Yet she had higher aspirations than those satisfied by the comic muse, and when her day's routine was done, she took up more earnestly her conscientious grind upon a novel which she hoped would some day give her serious consideration among critics. But she found herself often so lacking in knowledge and skill that she was wont to appear at dinner discouraged if not defeated by her task.

"I can't do it," she would say to Cicely, almost every evening, and Cicely would inev-

itably answer, "You *can* do it, and you 've *got* to do it, Miss Meadows!"

Cicely herself had no such ambitions, and was content to go on from day to day with her table service and housework. Every one liked Cicely, and by reason of her interminable interest and sympathy and her never-failing willingness to listen, she had wheedled herself into the confidence of every one in the house. She was a petite, dimpling, smiling girl of twenty-three, with hazel eyes, the prettiest and trimmest of figures, and hands whose delicacy and grace were extraordinary for one of her station. Rumor had it that she was distantly related to Mrs. Peterborough; at any rate, her domestic attentions in the boarders' rooms, and her familiar engaging presence in the hall and dining-room, gradually made her regarded as a confidential ally rather than as a servant. Even Miss Meadows, the imperious, proud beauty, had graciously condescended to bestow a sort of intimacy upon little Cicely the maid.

Miss Meadows was indeed somewhat in need of a confidante, for proud as she was, she was not the sort of young woman who could long endure the attentions of three suitors without talking

it over with some one. Propinquity was playing its customary part at the little table in the dining-room; and the young author, having been, so to speak, owned by a syndicate, would apparently soon have to choose one among them for her future manager. She had alluded to herself as "Miss Meadows, Limited," but she could not carry that joke much farther. Shem, Ham, and Japheth were already showing signs of restlessness, and there was a suppressed rivalry evident. Miss Meadows's tact had been put to a severe test to maintain an equality of favors.

"But don't you really know which one you care for most?" Cicely ventured to inquire one morning, as she dusted Miss Meadows's room.

"Well, I like Shem, because he wears a smooth shaven face and has a sense of humor; but when he helps me on with my coat, he keeps his cigar in his mouth. Ham *does* have a mustache, but he never tilts his hat on the back of his head. I hate Japheth's pointed beard, but of course he 's a dear. They 're all nice, in their way."

"Still, there must be *one* — unless there 's

some one else," said Cicely. "*I* know who's the best, I'm sure."

"There's no one else, and I know who you mean, but somehow I'm never sure. I'm like the princess in the fairy tale. I'd like to put them to some test, to be sure I got the right one. I don't want to marry any one yet, but I'd like to see them each in some crisis. Perhaps the best test would be for them to be successful. Most people can stand failure or bad luck, but good fortune tells the story of character better, I think."

Cicely listened, as usual, with a curious quiet, bird-like attention, and a smile that half closed her eyes and deepened the dimples in her cheeks. Miss Meadows went on with her typewriting. Cicely still watched her; then, when the room was in order, she ran upstairs to talk to Mrs. Peterborough.

. . . . . .

That night Japheth called upon Miss Meadows in her room. Japheth's blue eyes, pointed beard, and fine dark hair, thinning over his temples, did not differentiate him obviously from others of his type. In a company one did not notice him at first, but he could not be long in

a room before one realized that he was there — "always on the boat with his ticket punched," Shem used to say — modest, strong, observant. Then, one waited for his quick smile and his trenchant remarks. His clothes, neat but worn and a bit old fashioned in cut, showed a pathetic attempt to be brave. Miss Meadows, in her more magnificent moods, rather pitied him, but though he talked little, he had much to give her. His shyness, his tact and consideration, produced a feeling of restful intimacy and confidence. He was the sort of man to whom a woman would most readily go for help, sure of his willingness and his judgment. Shem and Ham paid Miss Meadows all the conventional compliments of flowers, books, and invitations, but Japheth's unobtrusive kindness filled the smaller chinks of her leisure.

He waited quietly for her to complete the chapter she was reading, — she was enough spoiled by her attentions to receive him somewhat cavalierly, — watching her spirited face as it changed. Then, when she at last laid her book down, he said: —

"Maud, I got a raise of salary to-day at the office. I 've been made head draughtsman."

"Really? I'm glad they appreciate you at last."

"It means a lot to me," Japheth went on. "You see, I've had to help my mother all along, and this leaves me more than enough for myself, now. It will give me a chance to be more original in my work, too. You know I have some theories in architecture."

"I suppose you'll go abroad, as you've always longed to. I hope you can. Italy would be a great inspiration to you, just now, especially."

"There's only one thing I want to do more than that — one thing that would be more of an inspiration."

"What's that?" She smiled good-naturedly, with the lamplight striking sparks and curling flames upon her hair.

"To marry you," he said as calmly. He saw her face change suddenly. The smile died away, and two little lines came in her forehead. Then she leaned back into the shadow.

"Oh, Japheth!" she said, "I'm sorry you said that! I didn't expect it at all, and I hate to hurt you — but you mustn't say anything more about it. If I had thought of your feel-

ing that way, I would have stopped you, but it 's too late now."

"You might have seen that I was in love with you long ago," he said. "And you 'll see it for a long time after this. I can't stop, even though I 've spoiled it all by speaking too soon — it is n't that way with me. I shall go right on loving you and thinking about you first in everything."

"I hope you understand," Miss Meadows said, "that I don't care for anybody that way — I don't care for anything but my novel. Even if I did love any one, I would never consent to marry until I had finished it. You know I 've got to go to Colorado and live there for a few months before I can get that ranch chapter right. I 've tried to fake it, and use other people's descriptions, but it 's no use. I 've got to see the life myself and get an original point of view."

"There are things enough to say, if I wanted to try to persuade you," Japheth replied. "But somehow I can't say them. 'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady,' I know, but I 'm too fond of you, Maud, to want you if you don't want me. There 's no forcing a thing like that. It comes,

or it does n't, and I don't want it by halves. You can ask for the things you don't want so very much, but the things you really care most for have to be given to you freely. I 'm glad you 're so in earnest about your novel, and I want you to win more than anything else — now. I 'll try to adjust myself to a scheme of things with you left out. Good-by! I am leaving you, but you won't leave me, Maud!"

He left her with a smile.

. . . . . .

Shem was the first one down to breakfast, the next day, and he came in high spirits. He was jubilant and boisterous enough at all times, the typical hail-fellow-well-met, with a slap on the back for his men friends and a chuck under the chin for Cicely. To-day he fairly bubbled. His round, smiling face shone behind his spectacles, and his hair was, as usual, not unattractively tousled in baby curls. He had an appearance of boyishness even at thirty, and though liked by all, was characteristically a man's man, amusing, awkward, careless, a sort of human Newfoundland puppy, from whose proximity one carefully removed things breakable. He was an advertising writer, and delighted in the slang and

gossip of the town. He jumped up when Miss Meadows appeared, to pull back her chair for her, tipping over a glass of water in the process.

"Say, didn't I tell you this boarding-house was haunted?" he broke out. "Did n't I say it was improbable and impossible? Did you get a letter this morning?"

"Yes — two rejections," said Miss Meadows.

"That 's a shame. But are you sure you did n't get a long yellow envelope, typewritten address, inclosing ten one-hundred-dollar bills?"

"It 's shockingly bad form to tell your dreams at the breakfast-table," said Miss Meadows, paying more attention to her egg than to him.

"If it 's a dream, all I 've got to say is, don't wake me up!" Shem went on. He took a manila envelope and passed it over to her. "I wish you 'd look at that and see whether I 'm crazy or not. Don't it beat the Child's Dream of a Star for human interest?"

Miss Meadows drew out ten new, crisp hundred-dollar bills and gazed at them in amazement. "Where in the world did they come from?" she asked wonderingly.

"I don't know — Heaven, I guess. People are n't much like that down here. It looks to me like the beginning of the millennium. Some one has exercised rare discrimination, and I ask no questions. It 's a ticket to Paradise accidentally dropped by some angel."

As Cicely came up to take his order for breakfast, he took her hand affectionately. "Cicely," he said, "I want champagne and mince pie, this morning, and a whole lot of roc's eggs. I 've discovered a brand-new fairy godmother, and I 'm going to see New York in the reddest automobile that swims the Broadway Sea! Selah!"

"You don't mean to say you 're going to spend it right away, do you?" cried Miss Meadows. "How do you know but it 's some mistake?"

"I 'm going to bust a hole in at least one of them," said Shem, "and I invite you to play with me till the detectives arrive, Maudie. That 's my name on the envelope, is n't it? There 's no doubt about it. My many virtues are at last discovered by some keen-witted millionaire, and I propose to be a credit to him. All you have to do is to name your particular

brand of theatre and restaurant, and New York is yours. We'll make gladsome holiday while the sun shines, if you 're not otherwise engaged for the next twelve hours."

At this moment Ham came in, and sat down with a nod. He was a smallish man, with pink cheeks and a silky mustache, which it was his custom to caress affectionately. His hair, parted in the middle, was smoothly brushed and trimly cut. In attire he was point-devise, speckless, spotless, unwrinkled, correct, and clean. It needed no great observation to name him a bank clerk — the very polish of his patent leather shoes, the strict accuracy of his tie, and his well-kept hands attested the fact.

"Would you mind pinching me, to see if I 'm awake?" was his first remark to Shem.

"You don't mean to say that *you 've* received one, too!" Miss Meadows exclaimed, with a shade of envy in her voice.

He looked up in surprise, then down at the envelope beside Shem's plate. "What does it all mean?" he asked.

"Then *your* rich uncle in Patagonia has discovered you, too?" Shem remarked gayly.

"It certainly looks that way," Ham replied.

"I don't mind saying I 'm rather frightened. What are we supposed to do, anyway?"

"Take it like a man!" said Shem. "If any one 's trying to play horse with me, I 'll give him a run for his money!"

"Where do I come in?" inquired Miss Meadows regretfully.

"You come right in on the front seat with me, while the roll lasts," was Shem's enthusiastic answer.

"I have thought of putting this in the bank till I see if there are any further developments," said Ham. "There must be some kind of a condition to this. I don't see how I can consider the money mine until I know more about it. If I deposit it, I 'll be on the safe side, whatever happens. One can't be too careful."

"I wonder if Japheth got a letter too," said Miss Meadows.

As Cicely came up, she asked, "Cicely, is Japheth up yet?"

Cicely paused at the little table long enough to say, "Why, what d' you think! Japheth left the house half an hour ago, and told me to pack his trunk for him. He told me to say good-by

to you all — he was sorry he did n't have time to see you again."

Shem whistled. "Foxy Japheth! *He* is n't going to waste his, celebrating with his friends!"

"Yes," said Ham, "he must have got one, all right. I would n't have thought he would treat us that way, though! Skinflint!"

Miss Meadows's face showed a look of distress. She bit her lip. Then she straightened herself and said, "Japheth has a right to do as he pleases, I 'm sure. There must be some good reason for his going so suddenly. You don't know that he got any money, after all!"

"Cicely!" called Ham, "come over here a moment. Cicely, did Japheth get a letter like this in the mail to-day?"

Cicely looked him straight in the eyes. "Mrs. Peterborough has told me I 'm to know as little as possible about the boarders' mail," she said. "There 's only one thing she 's particular about in the house, and that 's gossip."

She moved away unconcernedly. Miss Meadows smiled faintly, and played with her glass. The two men looked silly.

"That 's right," said Shem finally. "It 's none of our business. All the same, I 'm dis-

appointed. Can I see you in a little while, Maud?" Miss Meadows nodded, and Shem left the table.

As soon as he had left, Ham dropped his voice and began to speak to her with a new seriousness. As he spoke, Miss Meadows, still abstracted, fingered her glass.

"Maud," said Ham, "I 've got to say something now, while I have the chance. This thing has made a tremendous difference in my prospects. I know just where I can put a thousand dollars to best possible advantage, and I 'm going to do it. If all goes well, it will be doubled before long, and then there 's one thing more I want to invest in — and that 's a wife. I can't stand this syndicate business any longer. I 'm in love with you, Maud, and I want to marry you. I would have told you any way, in a little while, as soon as I was sure I had the right to ask, but this good luck settles it. I hope you 're fond of me. You see what these other fellows are like, now. One is a happy-go-lucky, extravagant chap, and the other is a stingy sneak."

"How dare you say that?" cried Miss Meadows. "Only yesterday you called your-

self his friend, and now you suspect him of the worst possible motives."

"Don't you?" Ham asked, coldly.

The tears were already visible in her eyes, and she did not answer.

"Well, we 'll leave him out of the question," said Ham. "I 'm sorry I showed any jealousy, but I want you terribly. Just because I don't spill over myself, like Shem, and make a scene about you, you must n't think I 'm not in earnest. You 're the girl I want, and I must have you. I 'd be so happy with you, and so proud of you, as my wife. Our tastes are really alike, and you 'd be through with this stewing over a typewriter and never getting anywhere. You 're working yourself to death, and it 's all nonsense for a girl like you to have to support herself. I 'm able and willing now to do all that for you. I love you, Maud, and I hate to see you eating your heart out in a boarding-house bedroom. You 're too young and good and pretty for that!"

"I 'd never give up writing, at any rate," Maud declared. "It means too much to me. Oh, you don't understand! I must finish my novel before I think of anything else. I 've got

hold of something too big for me, but I 'm determined to win."

"Nonsense!" Ham was patronizingly indulgent. "You 'll get over all that. What you need is a home of your own and some one to take care of you. A woman's place is in the home, and that 's where she 's happiest. As my wife you 'd have good society and good clothes, and a husband who 'd be too proud of you to let you bang a typewriter."

"Don't ask me yet!" Miss Meadows implored him. "Not here, not now, at any rate! Give me two weeks, at least!"

She arose, flushing deeply, and went upstairs. She had not been there long before Cicely tapped on the door, and came in, laden with fresh linen. Miss Meadows put her arms about the maid's waist.

"Oh, Cicely," she pleaded, "you 've just *got* to tell me! I must know about it! I can't stand it! I know it 's base and undignified, but it means so much to me. You will tell me if Japheth got one of those letters, won't you?"

"Yes, he did. I took it up to his room, myself. It was just like the others," said Cicely.

Miss Meadows threw herself down on the

bed, while Cicely tried in vain to comfort her. "Oh, he *was* the one, after all, was n't he, Miss Meadows? Of course I suspected it all the time. You 'd best forget all about him. He is n't worth worrying about, in my opinion."

Miss Meadows bathed her eyes, and sat down to her typewriter doggedly. After Cicely had left, she heard Shem's lusty voice outside the door, demanding entrance. A look in the glass, a quick readjustment of her hair, a pull at the curtain to shade the room, and she let him in.

Shem's spirits had not yet flagged. He held a sheet of paper in his hand as he sat down.

"Here 's my schedule," he announced. "I 've been thinking this fairy tale over, and I stack it up this way: whoever was drunk enough to assist Fate and Destiny in this way, did n't intend me to invest a thousand dollars in foreign missions or contribute to the hospitals. If he 'd had the charity bug, he 'd have sent the money to some one else besides Handsome Shem, the Joyful Spender. What he, or she, or it wanted, was evidently to cast a ray of sunshine into some heart that knew how to take a thousand plunks' worth of solid happiness, in

one gorgeous hunk. This is the way I propose to make good. Behold!"

He read from his schedule: "Hansom cab to the Bronx Zoo and return to the St. Regis for a twenty-seven dollar lunch. Automobile in the afternoon through the Park, stopping at way stations. Dinner at Sherry's, with assorted friends. Box party to Mrs. Fiske's latest histrionic sermon, and home *via* Rector's and the Café Boulevard."

"Do you know," he added, "it's a lot harder work to spend money than I thought. I'm afraid my list is a little conventional, but with a few stops at jewelers', perhaps I can run it up to a decent figure. You'll help me out, won't you, Maud?"

"I really ought to work, Shem"—

"Oh, this will do you good, and you'll get lots of material. I'll ring for a cab while you put on your things."

. . . . . .

"Maud's the hardest girl to spend money on I ever saw," Shem announced to Cicely, as she lingered by their table to hear of the day's doings. "She was forever economizing and taking street-cars when cabs would have done just

as well. I don't know how I would have finished that hundred, if it had n't been for her lust for literature. That 's where I had her. She could n't resist Henry James, and a row of minor poets made a very respectable hole in that first bill. Next time, I 'm going to think it out better. And say, Cissy, there was a red auto trailing us about all day. I saw it four or five times, and there was a girl in gray in it that might have been your sister, as well as I could see for her goggles. What have you been doing, anyway?"

"Oh, I 've taken a day off, too," said Cicely. "I had some important business to attend to, and Mrs. Peterborough let me go."

Shem handed over ten dollars. "Next time you get off, Cicely, you get in and enjoy yourself, will you? Make believe you 're the girl in gray, and do it well!"

"Thank you, I shall. I have a gray suit myself," said Cicely.

Miss Meadows worked next day as she had not worked for weeks, and, late in the afternoon, she called Cicely in to listen to what had been written. It was a favorite experiment, founded on Dean Swift's advice, for Miss Meadows regarded Cicely as a good example of the Average

Reader. After the day's installment had been discussed, the talk became more personal.

"Have you made up your mind yet?" Cicely asked.

"How can I, Cicely? Shem is such a dear, and so generous, that no one can help being fond of him. He has kept me laughing for two days; but Ham is so much more in earnest, and really knows what's what. But a man ought to have both prudence and impulsiveness."

"Japheth has both," said Cicely.

"Japheth's out of the question, now, I'm afraid. I believe he's gone abroad. It's a question between Shem and Ham."

"Three little nigger boys, walking in the Zoo,
The big bear hugged one, and then there were two!"

Cicely chanted.

"Cicely," said Miss Meadows, "where do you suppose all that money came from? It's astonishing! It's positively uncanny! I feel as if some one were experimenting in a new, strange way! There's always been something queer about this house — even *you're* queer, Cicely; you're not at all the sort of person one usually finds for a waitress and chambermaid — you're too pretty, you're too intelligent.

But who could have so much money to spend on such an experiment?"

"Oh, probably some one with more money than he wants is merely amusing himself with the boys. It's exactly what I'd do, if I could afford it — would n't you? Or, perhaps, it's some one who has taken a fancy to *you*, and wants to help you to make up your mind."

"I don't want to make up my mind," said Miss Meadows bitterly. "I only want to finish my novel!"

. . . . . .

Next morning, while Miss Meadows was sipping her coffee, the two young men came in together. Shem was buoyant, as usual, with a button off his coat, Ham calm, dignified, and immaculate.

"The lightning has struck again in the same place," Shem announced. "I don't know where this thing's going to end. I shall have to cut off my little finger to propitiate the gods. It's too much luck! I don't dare go down town today for fear of missing something in the eleven o'clock mail."

"Did you get *another* thousand?" Miss Meadows cried.

"That's what I did! Upper Fifth Avenue for mine, if this keeps up! I can stand it as long as my anonymous friend can."

"And did you receive yours, too?" Miss Meadows asked Ham.

Ham looked sober and a bit embarrassed. "I 'm afraid I 've dropped out of the game. I must have offended the Fates in some way."

"Oh, I 'm so sorry!" she said. "I can't imagine why you were left out."

Shem, in consideration of Ham's confession, forbore to give further vent to his delight, and the three finished their meal constrainedly. After Miss Meadows had gone upstairs, and had been working for some time, Cicely knocked, and came in with her eyes dancing.

"Miss Meadows," she said, "there *is* something queer about this house, as you said. Ham has up and left, too. He packed his trunk before breakfast, and has left word with me to have his mail forwarded by a messenger."

"Why, he did n't say anything to me about going" — Miss Meadows began. "I can't understand it."

"I think I can," said Cicely. "He got one of those yellow envelopes this morning."

"He said he did n't!" Miss Meadows exclaimed in surprise.

"That gives us an interesting side-light on his character, does n't it?" Cicely smiled till her eyes were half closed, and then sang merrily, —

"Two little nigger boys, sitting in the sun,
One got frizzled up, and then there was one!"

. . . . . .

The immediate effect of Shem's second windfall was to make him unexpectedly prudent. He made no attempt, this time, to celebrate his good luck, but went as usual to the office. He manifested, also, an extraordinary inclination to "settle down," and spent several evenings in Miss Meadows's room, expounding his views of the quiet life, love in a cottage, bread and cheese and kisses, and so on, all amusing to Miss Meadows, who had, heretofore, known only the breezy, adventurous side of his nature. She grew to like him more and more in this character, however, and looked forward to the hours when his semi-humorous philosophy of content would bring a pleasant, comfortable peace to her tired brain. Then he began skipping a meal occasionally, and she found that she missed his jocund face and his vivacious slang.

A week passed, and she had not seen him except during his hurried breakfasts at the little round table, where, so often, she had to eat alone, when, one evening, he paid her a visit in her room.

"I guess Fate has gone out of the miracle business," he said, throwing himself on the couch. "The thousand-dollar flurry seems to be about over. It 's just as well, I suppose; one more installment would have made a miser of me. Funny what poison money is, is n't it? It 's taken all the starch out of me. Before our mysterious friend began to fool with my destiny, I was a simple, joyous soul, and it took little to make me happy. The world was mine for three dollars and a half. There was charm in the drama, madness in music, wealth, health, and happiness in wine; and a good, old-fashioned time with the boys was all I knew of heaven. Now behold me, Maud, descended to the vulgar ideals of the commonplace. I don't want an automobile or a yacht. I want a seven-room flat! I 've a wild desire to nail down carpets and hang up pictures. I 'm domesticated to the level of the most ordinary commuter. Maud, don't faint when I tell you, — don't say

it 's too sudden to be true, — but the one yearn of my existence is now to see a pair of little No. 2 A shoes beside mine on the fender, of an evening, if we can afford a fender, and have somebody with a red-hot steak ready for me at six o'clock. I 've sunk as low as that. What d' you think?"

Miss Meadows had shown signs of agitation, and now she forced a smile. "Oh, I can't believe it! You 'll get over this mood in a week."

"In a week," said Shem, folding his arms, and cocking his head on one side, "I shall be married — to a girl I 've known ever since I wore kilts, and never knew I loved till last night. I 've had symptoms before, but this is a real case. I am certainly going to commit matrimony with malice aforethought, Maud, so congratulate me!"

She had recovered her composure at the first hint, and now held out her hand cordially. "I do!" she said. "But I 'm sorry to lose you, for I suppose you 'll be leaving soon."

"To-morrow — so good-by, Maud, and do come round and see me take the fatal plunge. I 'll send you word when and where and how."

. . . . . .

The next day Miss Meadows breakfasted alone at the little round table. She had arisen late, and was in no mood for work. So she dallied with her egg and coffee listlessly, or traced figures upon the tablecloth with her spoon, unconscious of the lapse of time. No one would have known her for the imperious, self-satisfied, spoiled beauty of two weeks ago.

Cicely came up with her perennial smile.

"One little nigger boy, living all alone,
He got married, and then there was none!"

she warbled. "Well," she added, "I do hope the person who 's been meddling with the affairs of this house is satisfied now! The last interesting man is gone, and you 're not married off yet, Miss Meadows. But there may be more chances. Perhaps your turn will come next."

"I 'm afraid my turn has come and gone," was the moody answer.

"Why, I did n't know but that you got some good news in that letter I put under your door this morning," said Cicely, in some surprise.

"I did n't see any letter! I was thinking about something so hard that probably I did n't notice it."

"Do let me get it for you, then," said Cicely;

and, as Miss Meadows went on with her breakfast, the little maid nimbly ran upstairs, to return soon with an envelope. Miss Meadows opened it with her fork, looked in, and then turned an excited face to the waitress.

"Cicely," she exclaimed, "it *is* money! I do believe it's going to happen to me, too, after all! Isn't it perfectly lovely! Look! One, two, three, four, six, eight, ten hundred dollars! Oh, Cicely, I want to scream!"

Cicely smiled calmly. "It must be nice to get so much money," was all she said; but there was no trace of envy upon her face.

"Oh, I wish *you'd* get some, too!" said Miss Meadows. "If I only knew who sent this, I'd ask them to remember you — you've been so dear to all of us!"

"It wouldn't do any good," Cicely said, seriously now; "the person who sent you that money has precious little more to give away."

Miss Meadows looked up in astonishment. "Why, have you any idea who sent this?" she asked.

"Yes, I have. It's from some one who wants you to use it for your trip out West, so that you can finish your novel and become famous."

"How do you know?"

"I was told. You see, the one who sent it did n't want to be thanked, and does n't want you to feel under the slightest obligation. You're to use this money only for that especial purpose."

"Tell me who it is!"

"I promised not to, Miss Meadows, but I can tell you this: there's a ranch in the Red River Valley, in Colorado, where you'll find just exactly the material you want. It's owned by a Mr. Oscar Jefferson, and his wife will board you. He has plenty of horses, and he can talk. You take the D. & R. G. from Denver to Calhoun, and from there by stage to Grisly Peak. When you decide to come, Mr. Jefferson will meet you at the Florodora Hotel."

Miss Meadows looked straight into Cicely's eyes. "Cicely," she said, "there's only one person in the world who would go to such pains to find all that out for me, and that person must have sent me this money."

"I promised not to tell, and I must keep my word, this time," Cicely said, stoutly.

"That one person," Miss Meadows went

on, and her voice broke queerly as she spoke, "is dear old Japheth. I won't ask you if this is the money he got, Cicely, but, Cicely," — she took Cicely's hand and looked at her through tears, — "won't you please tell me where Japheth is?"

"Japheth's in Colorado," said Cicely, smiling again.

Miss Meadows broke down, now, and laid her head on the table, speaking between her sobs. Her imperiousness had gone, long ago. "Cicely, dear, Japheth once told me that the things one wanted most could n't be asked for — they had to be given freely — I 've got something I want to give him — I think I 'll telegraph him to wait there till I can come out — I can finish my novel just as well after — after we 're married."

She raised her head, now, and smiled beautifully. Then she added: "But we 'll come back here to live, Cicely! I love this boarding-house!"

"I 'm awfully afraid you can't, Miss Meadows," said Cicely, gathering up the dishes. "Mrs. Peterborough is going to give up the house, and I 've already got another place!"

VIII

The New York and Arcady Railroad

IT should go without saying that part of this story, the chief part, I did not know till so long afterward that it did not matter. Not that it would have mattered then, I suppose, for I had had my fortune for a day, and that gave me a new power over my own will.

It all seems foolish enough, now, for me to have stood off and made her do the wooing, but I was young and proud. I did not know then how little such things should matter in love's sight. But I learned before long a new lesson from Miss Million; I learned the unselfishness not only of generosity, but of acceptance. She, knowing how much more blessed it is to give than to receive, could, with all her longing for generosity, accept generously. In this she was as simple as in her giving, and giving was so natural a part of her character that she seemed to expect it of others, often even

forgetting her thanks, taking the gift for granted, as one she would have made herself without thinking, had the positions been reversed.

As it happened, too, the loss of five millions was hardly felt at all by Miss Million, for she became heir to her Aunt Margaret shortly after we were married. And I think that no one, even Miss Million herself, could have used that money more wisely than did Mary, for the story of her spending of it would make another book as long as this.

And so I leave you. I am still in Arcady with Margaret, and I hope never to venture far away.

The New York and Arcady Railroad

IT was Margaret Million's birthday, — she was twenty-four, — youth was still bubbling up in her glass, and the fountain seemed ceaseless. She had health, wealth, wit, and beauty. She had brought the priceless gift of romance to many, she had suffered and rejoiced with them, she had played the part of a little sister of Destiny — was it not time for her to be the heroine? She had just discovered herself to be in love, but money could not buy her happiness; indeed, her money might only drive it away.

It was with such thoughts that Miss Million returned from the boarding-house, where, unknown and unsuspected, she had put a delicate, urgent finger between the strands of fate, and had drawn them wondrously aside, bringing hidden golden threads up into the gray pattern of two lives.

She opened the door of her apartment, and,

still disguised in the black frock and the linen cuffs and collars of a housemaid, entered the Indian hall. Lonely as her birthday might be, she was glad to be at home again.

Hachewa, her Navajo maid, parted the portières and greeted her with customary stolidity.

"Mr. Rayne is here, waiting for you in the library," she announced.

Miss Million nodded and passed into her chamber. In twenty minutes she returned, gowned in lace pervaded with pearls over rose chiffon, like a cobweb bedecked with dewdrops. A pink rose was in her hair. She saw no one in the library, but, questing the room, her eyes fell upon a mimic scene laid out upon the floor. In a moment she was on her knees before it, uttering a cry of delight. Then, by a reaction of feeling, her eyes were suffused with tears.

It was a tiny replica, in painted pasteboard, of her ranch-house in California, set in a grove of toy trees, surrounded by the familiar paths and roads in sandpaper. Not a shed or outbuilding was missing. It was like looking through the small end of a telescope. The

house windows were made from sheets of mica; and behind the little white sashes were draped lacy paper curtains. On the broad front porch was her hammock, her chair, even her faded pink sunbonnet. From the chimney curled a rising thread of perfumed smoke.

The one incongruous detail was the toy railroad track, which, curving round the house, came from and returned to the room beyond. In another moment, however, its function was evident. She heard a labored puffing of steam; then, climbing over the grade at the door-sill and hurrying down the decline, to career dangerously round the curve, came a Lilliputian train, pulled by a ridiculously energetic locomotive.

She stopped it as it passed, seeing a note in one of the open cars. In it was written: —

> "Please take this magic-carpet train
> And make yourself — at home!
> And take my greetings, if you 'll deign
> To read this birthday pome."

She placed a book upon the track, and leaving the little engine like a tied kitten struggling to get away, she ran to her desk and wrote upon a sheet of paper: —

"DEAR MAGIC, — You have sent me a cargo of smiles and tears. Do take the train and come to share them with me. M. M."

In another moment Winton Rayne came in and found her still seated on the floor. She held up her hand for him to kiss, and said: —

"It was so dear of you to get this beautiful little ranch for me; but oh, it does make me so homesick! Did you want to drive me back to California? I wish we could get into that little train together and go somewhere — I don't exactly know where."

An answer seemed to flutter on his lips, only to be sent back in disgrace. "It is dark there behind the curtain where the train went," he said; "it might be dangerous traveling!"

"But I *want* to go behind the curtain! I've been behind the curtain of other lives, you know. Now I want to explore my own!"

"Are n't you afraid of the dark?" he questioned; "we might upset and fall out."

"I would n't be afraid, with you," she dared, her eyes fixed shining upon him.

He resisted even this encouragement, but the effort drew a triangularly-cleft frown be-

tween his brows, and shut his fine lips below his closely-cropped black mustache; his brown eyes, usually so direct and fearless, turned from the sight of her. Suddenly he shook himself free from his mood.

"I have n't given you your real presents yet," he said. "I have one for every birthday you 've had."

He went out into the hall and brought in a clothes-basket filled with packages. "Here they are," he began; "I 'll give them to you in chronological order. The first one is dated 1881."

He handed them to her, one by one, and she opened them as gleefully as a child, with a running fire of comment.

"One year — a rattle, of course! And I 've never been rattled since, I believe. Two years — a silver mug with my name engraved on it. Yes, I remember that! Three years old — a rubber ball. Four — a doll. Five — the 'Chatterbox' — I remember every picture in it. Six years — a kaleidoscope — I have n't outgrown my love for them yet. Seven — a paint-box, no compliment to my complexion. Eight years — oh! oh! oh! A carnelian ring — I have n't seen one for perfect ages!"

She placed it upon her little finger, smiling quietly. "I can just remember a little boy with red hair and freckles" —

"Nine years — an autograph album — did you ever! Have you written in it? Oh, yes, here it is, with secrets and initials in the corner and the regulation verse — 'I thought and thought and thought in vain, at last I thought I 'd write my name.' With your name erased and carefully rewritten, of course. Yes, I know you could write better than that — you need n't apologize. Ten years old, now — a scrap-book, with pages for a paper-doll's dining-room, bedroom, kitchen, and everything. I 'm going to cut some beautiful furniture out of the magazines. Eleven — how *did* you know I used to love tops? I was the worst tomboy in town, of course; every nice girl is. Twelve — a jump-rope. I can do pepper, right now, faster than anybody *you* ever saw! Thirteen — Roman sash. Oh, dear! I 'm growing up! I would have been crazy about that when I was a girl. Fourteen — bangle with engraved dimes. What I *really* had was a strawberry broncho and a Mexican saddle, and a quirt with a gold nugget in the butt of it. Pa struck it rich that year.

Fifteen — what lovely green beads — my favorite color! I 'll put them right on. Are n't they becoming? Sixteen — a fan. I 'm beginning to dance — the first one I ever went to was a Mexican cascaroni dance, where they smash egg-shells full of confetti on your head, and you comb sparks of colored paper out of your hair for a week afterward. Seventeen — diary for the year 1898. Where did you ever find it? One week all written in — no, I *won't* show it to you, I 'd be ashamed! Eighteen — Trilby locket. Why did n't you put your picture inside? Nineteen — 'Lucile.' I wonder if I could read it again? Twenty — side-combs. Twenty-one — watch and chain — almost gold; and as good a diamond ring for a quarter as I have ever seen. Twenty-two — opera-glasses. You struck *that* right. I was wild over Shakespeare two years ago. Twenty-three — a bank-book with a dollar already deposited! Now you 'd better be careful! Twenty-four — oh, Winton — a mirror! That 's a very pretty compliment!"

"How kind you 've been to me! How could you ever have thought of so many clever, charming things?" She looked up with delight.

"It *is* rather difficult to think up presents for

an heiress." he said. "I was at my wits' end for an idea. You have everything you need already. It 's like giving a jubilee present to a queen."

"That fatal ten millions of mine!" she sighed. "They have stood in the way of so many things. If I had n't been able to do a few good things with it, I would say that I hated my money. Ever since I was a girl it has attracted the worst men to me and kept the best men away. Do you wonder that I have wanted to forget that I was rich, and to live with common, simple people who would accept me for what I am? I wish you did n't know that I had money. I don't believe that even you can be unaffected by it. One hears a great deal about the pride of wealth, but it 's nothing to the pride of poverty, which hedges its self-respect about with such ridiculous reserves."

"You 're right — I know that well enough." He turned away from her, and spoke as if to himself. "Money matters — there 's no getting around it! A year ago I would have laughed at the man who said he would n't dare propose to a rich girl; but I understand it better now. There 's an insurmountable barrier as strong as the color-line. It is n't right or reasonable, but

it's there. It's almost a question of caste. I know how exasperated you must feel about it sometimes, but I realize what any decent man must have felt about it, too. The poor man won't speak and the rich girl can't."

"Not unless the poor man drives her to it," she murmured.

He did not hear her, for he was walking up and down the room, now, continuing his soliloquy.

"Perhaps a man who has never had any money has an exaggerated idea of its value, as the self-made man overestimates the importance of a college degree, but the idea of being dependent on his wife for every cent must hurt his self-respect, no matter how willing she is to support him. But I suppose it's just as hard for the heiress as it is for the refined pauper. It's a case of the irresistible force meeting an immovable body. It's a battle of pride."

"It was never a case of pride with me," said Miss Million, drawing the tip of her forefinger thoughtfully down the path between the little trees. "I don't see why I can't be perfectly simple with my friends, and they with me. There should be no question of pride when one really

cares for another, and yet I have no doubt this hateful money of mine will eventually stand in the way of my marrying the man I love most."

"Oh, you may fall in love with a millionaire; in that case it will be all right," Rayne remarked a little bitterly.

Miss Million began to rearrange the toy trees. "There 's not much danger of that," she said. "Millionaires don't often have imagination." She put her finger into the curling perfumed smoke coming from the chimney of the tiny house. "They seldom have sentiment." She swung the little hammock on the front porch. "I never knew one who understood what romance meant." She straightened the railroad track, and gazed wistfully at the spot where it disappeared between the portières.

"Yet you have all these," said Rayne, turning round to her suddenly.

"That 's why I 'm so lonely," she answered.

He was about to speak, and his look betrayed the emotion that was rising in him, when the Navajo maid appeared.

"A telegram for Mr. Rayne," she announced, handing him an envelope upon a tray.

He asked Miss Million's permission to read the message and glanced at it. "My Uncle Leopold died suddenly this afternoon. I must go immediately," he said.

She jumped to her feet and came towards him. "Oh, is it anybody you were very fond of?" she asked, holding out her hand.

He took it and returned her frank pressure. "I can't be really sorry, for he has suffered a good deal and I've been expecting this; but I was fond of him. He was the only relative I had in the world. He put me through college, and has done a good deal for me beside."

"He has no family, then? I hope he was not quite alone."

"There's only Mary, but she's lived with him and taken care of him for so long that she has been almost the same as a daughter to him, though he never legally adopted her."

"If there's anything I can do — if you need any money, — or Mary does, — I hope you'll let me help you. Or perhaps your uncle was well off?"

"Thank you. But I scarcely think there'll be any necessity for that. He had a little money, just about enough to live on, but he

was an inveterate speculator and he always lost. So I must be going, Miss Million, and I 'll remember your offer. I 'll be back as soon as I can, but I may have to be away a week."

As soon as he had left, Miss Million seated herself at her secretary and began to think. For some time she bit the end of her penholder reflectively. Then she reached for a sheet of paper and wrote very slowly and deliberately, pausing at intervals to consider her words. Then she placed the note in an envelope, which she addressed and sealed.

Next she arose and went to a panel in the library, which she opened, disclosing a safe built into the wall. She fingered the combination, pulled open the great door, and reached for a drawer marked "Personal Account." It was filled with neatly tied packets of Government bonds. She took out ten, closed the safe, and carried the securities with the letter to her room.

. . . . . .

A week later, Miss Million was bustling about with childlike excitement in her great dining-hall. She was girlishly dressed in a short gown of pongee silk, with a green stock, green belt, and embroidered green silk stockings.

The coquettish red heels of her little black slippers added almost two welcome inches to her stature, but her hair, hanging in a single long braid, compensated for the effect. The square-cut neck of her babyish waist showed a close string of dull green glass beads, and on the little finger of her left hand was a carnelian ring. When a woman wears such a costume, it is not done without premeditation and design.

Margaret Million was, apparently, happy. She added her voice at times in blithe, trilling flights to the strains of a huge music-box which poured out a stream of ringing, tinkling harmony from a far corner of the great room. In the centre of the parquetry floor a table, long and wide, had been placed; upon it, a marvel of toy-engineering, Winton Rayne's little railroad was laid out with a complicated system of tracks and switches. This plaything Miss Million was operating with enthusiasm. She was leaning, tiptoe, over the edge of the table to reach a yellow tin passenger-coach as Winton Rayne entered.

If she seemed five years younger in her costume and in her naive enjoyment of the play, something in his carriage and manner made him

appear older, or at least, more dignified and surer of himself, as if he had lately been distinguished by some honor or success. He was, however, no less eagerly affected at the sight of her. She ran to meet him, holding out both hands in welcome.

"I 'm so glad to see you! I hope everything is all right?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," he said, "although there have been some unexpected developments in regard to my uncle's estate that I may want to speak to you about."

Her serious air immediately changed to a gay frivolity.

"Wait till after dinner for that," she said. "You 've just been elected president of the N. Y. & A. Railroad. I 'm General Traffic Manager. I 've been wanting to see you about locomotive No. 999. She 's been jumping the track, and I don't know whether it 's the fault of the Motive Power or the Maintenance of Way Department. Do come and see what 's the matter."

"You seem to have learned a good deal about railroading in a week," he remarked.

"A week!" she repeated. "My father

owned six roads, I think I ought to know something about it! I can run a Mogul myself, and I 've done it, too — up six per cent grades and round ten degree curves!"

As she chattered on, she poured a little water into the boiler, and filled the alcohol lamp of the toy locomotive and lighted it.

"What did you say the name of this railroad was?" he asked.

"The New York & Arcady," she answered, stooping over the little engine to try the valve.

He looked as her hard. "If I 'm president, then I suppose I have a free pass over the line."

She nodded, still keeping her head down near No. 999.

"I always wanted to go to Arcady — but I don't like to travel alone."

"Look out!" she cried, "she 's ready to go!"

She gave it a little push to help it round a reversed curve, and No. 999 puffed bravely into the main track. As the steam pressure grew stronger, it went faster and faster, lurching drunkenly round the curves and whizzing along the tangents, Miss Million switching the train from one track to another over the sys-

tem. As they stood watching it, the locomotive ran into an open switch, jumped the track, and plunged over upon its side. The alcohol, escaping from the burner, enveloped the engine with blue flames.

"Oh, how *could* you, 999!" cried Miss Million.

Winton Rayne ran to the wreck and began to blow upon it with all his strength. "It 's your fault!" he gasped between puffs; "I know just how it feels myself!"

"Be careful, it will explode!" she cried. He snatched a rug from the floor and threw it over the conflagration. Just as he did so, a muffled explosion occurred and a cloud of steam escaped from beneath the rug. Then No. 999 lay still.

She looked at him with mischief in her eyes. "Do you feel like that, too?" she asked.

"I do," he answered, "do you know why?"

She refused to take him seriously even then, and, springing upon the table, sat on the edge, swinging her feet.

"I hope I do," she said, clasping her hands.

"Then I 'm going to explode too," he said, looking hard at her. "I 've been in love with

you for six months, Margaret, and I want to know if you care for me at all." He took her hand boldly.

"Why, of course, you goose! Have you only just discovered it?" Her eyes fell and rose to his again. "I love you so much, dear, that I should think you would have seen it in every look I ever gave you."

He caught her in his arms and gave her a half-dozen impetuous kisses. Then he held her tightly, gazing into her eyes. He saw them send him long, steady messages of tenderness. Then her lids half dropped, her lips parted, and two entrancing dimples added their whimsical roguery to her smile.

"Do you know," she said, "I thought you were going to propose to me on my birthday. Why did you wait for a whole, long week?"

"I have n't proposed yet," he said, with a smile.

"Oh, please do, quick!" she whispered.

"Even though I have n't a cent to my name?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, yes!" she cried, putting her arms about his neck.

"But I 'm *not* poor, after all," he said. "My

uncle must have had some extraordinary luck, for five millions was found on deposit in his name on the day after he died, and I am his sole legal heir. I am not as rich as you, dear, but I am in your class, and that 's why I 've dared to tell you I love you."

"I don't see how it makes any difference at all," she said wistfully. "You 're the same man that you were before, are n't you? I almost think I liked you even better as you were a week ago."

"Do you?" he exclaimed; "do you really? I 'd like to believe that!"

"Why?" she asked wonderingly.

"Because," he spoke slowly, "though I 'm worth five millions to-day, to-morrow I 'll be as poor as I ever was. You remember I told you that my uncle put me through college. Well, when I had graduated, he said to me, 'I 've done all I can for you now, Winton, and what money I leave I want to go to Mary.' Strangely enough, he died without making a will, and so of course I am in honor bound to give his fortune up to her. I intend to write and tell her so to-morrow. I waited only because being his heir seemed to give me some-

how the right to propose to you. I will have been a millionaire for just one week."

"That's long enough to win me," she said. "I hope you will consider your legacy well invested."

"I expect it to pay the biggest dividends ever heard of," he said rapturously.

"Oh, I am a gilt-edged security," she laughed.

"Then if I propose to you now, we can take the N. Y. & A. to Arcady?"

"As soon as you like, dear," she said. "I think we've got a good safe road."

She nestled closer to him, and laid her head upon his shoulder.

"Oh, Winton," she added, "if we're really going to be married, I think perhaps I'd better transfer my private account to you and let you manage it in the future. I've made a rather rash investment this week. I don't call it exactly unsuccessful, but I've lost quite a little money. Do you mind?"

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